a modern history of the mid-20th century development of chess

GARRY KASPAROV
ON MY GREAT PREDECESSORS
PART III

with the participation of Dmitry Plisetsky

Petrossian
Spassky

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INTRODUCTION

At the Junction of the Eras

This volume is devoted to the lives and games of two chess kings from the sixties and seventies of the last century – Petrosian and Spassky, as well as their outstanding opponents – Gligoric, Polugayevsky, Portisch and Stein.

In the introduction to the second volume I wrote that a genuine revolution in chess was accomplished by every fifth world champion: Steinitz (1st) – Botvinnik (6th) – Fischer (11th). Steinitz created a school of positional play, and Botvinnik – a system of preparing for competitions and sharp opening set-ups, whereby Black, ignoring classical rules, immediately disturbs the positional equilibrium and strives to seize the initiative. With the next four champions – Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian and Spassky – the theory of the game developed along the lines of the Botvinnik era, which thereby continued to the late 1960s. In the early 1970s the next revolutionary spurt was made by Fischer, essentially laying the foundation of present-day professional chess.

Nominally the Botvinnik era ended in 1963, when the champion of many years lost his match to Petrosian and opted out of any further contests for the chess crown. Soon after this Botvinnik wrote in *Chess World* (1964 No.2):

'It seems to me that in chess the time of geniuses has passed. In their time Morphy, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine were definitely superior to their contemporaries, and in particular by talent. Nowadays with talent alone you cannot exist: also required are health, a strong-willed competitive character and, finally, special preparation. A few decades ago the natural selection of the strongest players occurred among a comparatively narrow circle of people, and there were not many such players – their names are known to everyone. But now the mass base of chess is so great, that there are many very strong players – at present it is crowded on the chess Olympus. A good dozen grandmasters are distinguished by striking talent, and enviable health, and fighting character, and deep special preparation. The importance of special preparation should especially be mentioned: sometimes it is intuitive, at other times it consists in reducing to the minimum the influence of the opponent's preparation – a quality which is evidently typical of the new world champion. It can be asserted that, in the forming of the modern strong player, talent is no longer the decisive factor.'

One senses that Botvinnik's wounds had not yet healed after his heavy defeat. In fact, of course, he realised that he had lost to a great player. Three years later he asked Spassky, who had just lost a match to Petrosian: 'Were you able to guess his moves, Boris Vasilievich?' 'No, not always,' Spassky replied. 'I too was unable to guess them,' Botvinnik admitted. In his way of speaking this was the highest praise for his opponent! Subsequently he also gave both Spassky and Fischer their due...

Also debatable is his thesis about it being 'crowded on the chess Olympus'. Now the mass base of chess is even greater than forty years ago, and there are even more top-class grandmasters, but the proportions between the strong and very strong have not changed and the number of *real* contenders for the world championship is still extremely restricted.

However, in Botvinnik's evaluation there is an historic truth: the names of the past champions were always shrouded in a romantic halo of grandeur. However, the 1938 AVRO tournament, where Capablanca, Alekhine and Euwe made way for the young, signified the ending of the heroic era of the chess titans. Even so, thanks to his legendary victories in the 1940s, Botvinnik succeeded in prolonging this era – not without reason was he called the Patriarch of the Soviet Chess School. Smyslov was rightly regarded as his great opponent, and Tal as a vivid star, a meteor, 'the second Morphy'.

And suddenly at the summit there appeared Petrosian and Spassky – seemingly ordinary, non-heroic champions. But a detailed study of their games demonstrates the enormous scale of the talent of these chess kings, and the time when they were on the throne was an important stage in the accumulation of knowledge – something of a consolidating period, when the basis of modern chess was laid. In these years *Chess Informator* appeared, new opening schemes arose, the concepts of many middlegame positions were deepened, customary dogmas were reviewed (for example, the approach to positions with an isolated pawn changed) and so on.

The second Petrosian-Spassky match (1969) already heralded the approaching change of eras, which began with the arrival of Fischer. But that is a topic of the next volume.

I should like to express my thanks to grandmaster Vladimir Belov and to Honoured USSR Trainers Alexander Nikitin and Mark Dvoretsky for their help in preparing this volume for publication.

Garry Kasparov
August 2004

CHAPTER ONE

Tigran the Ninth

In his best years Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian (17 June 1929 – 3 August 1984) used to lose so rarely, that each defeat of his became a sensation. For this truly legendary impregnability he was nicknamed 'iron Tigran', although on account of his very distinctive 'passive' style it was hard to associate his name with the proud conquerors of the chess throne.

Meanwhile, Petrosian had a complete mastery of the art of creating harmonious positions, full of life, where behind the apparent absence of dynamics was concealed a colossal internal energy (the slightest changes being immediately taken into account in the general strategy, which was not always understandable to the opponent). As yet his games have not been studied as thoroughly and as comprehensively as one would like. He presented to the chess world what seem to be common truths, but it is they that essentially comprise the basis of chess creativity. The depth of Tigran Vartanovich's style is a consequence of the clarity of his thinking and his uncommon grasp not only of global chess problems, but also all the subtleties of tactics and strategy.

'Yes, perhaps I like defending more than attacking, but who has demonstrated that defence is a less risky and dangerous occupation than attack? And are there so few games that have found their way into the treasury of chess thanks to virtuoso defence?' said Petrosian. 'What I value more than anything in chess is logic. I am firmly convinced that in chess there is nothing accidental. This is my credo. I believe only in logical, "correct" play.'

He ascended to the throne in the year I was born, 1963. The 'Botvinnik era', which had lasted through a generation of Soviet players and to many seemed endless, was concluding. Botvinnik's absolute superiority had evaporated back in the early 1950s, but he had retained the world champion's crown, safely preserved not only by his enormous match experience and ability to prepare effectively for any specific opponent, but also by the right of the return match – a diabolical test for a new king, which became an excessive psychological burden for both Smyslov and Tal. And yet their accession to the throne was imagined by many to be a quite natural continuation of chess history: the crystal clarity of Smyslov's play and the incomparable magic of Tal's combinations seemed worthy landmarks in the new chess world. But Petrosian?!

Not just a Defender

Petrosian was born and grew up in Tbilisi, where he learned the rudiments of chess from the subtle positional master Arlich Ebralidze, a great admirer of Capablanca and Nimzowitsch. Tigran's progress was as measured and unhurried as his style. In 1945 – champion of Georgia, in 1946 – USSR junior champion (14 out of 15!) and in 1947, at the very first attempt – the master title. Modest, as though limbering-up performances, in two USSR Championships (1949 and 1950), and a win in the championship of his second 'little motherland' – Moscow. Finally, his first major success – in the Zonal, 19th USSR Championship (1951): after two initial defeats the young master gained eight wins with seven draws and qualified for the Interzonal tournament!

The scale of this triumph can be assessed only by looking at the leading places: 1. Keres – 12 out of 17; 2-3. Geller and Petrosian – 11½; 4. Smyslov – 11; 5. Botvinnik – 10; 6-8. Averbakh, Bronstein and Taimanov – 9½ etc. It became clear that some new stars had appeared on the chess horizon.

Petrosian was awarded a special prize for the best result against the grandmasters. This strong defender with good endgame technique, as the press commented, 'manoeuvred excellently, basing his strategic ideas on deep and accurate calculation, and tirelessly strove for the initiative.' And, just imagine, he employed risky openings, boldly sacrificing material! A classic example is his duel with Vasily Smyslov: even against one of the strongest players in the world, Petrosian was not afraid to play the sharp Tolush-Geller gambit.

Game 1

T.Petrosian-V.Smyslov

19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951

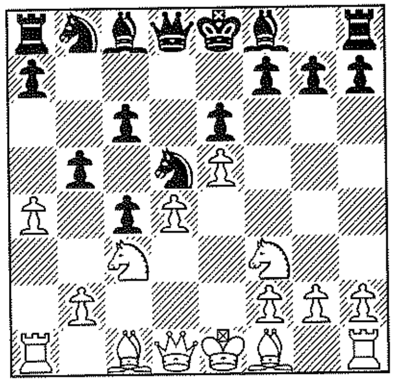
Slav Defence D15

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 c6 5 e4!? b5 6 e5

Generally speaking, 'Petrosian' and 'sacrifice' are not words that chess players tend to associate together. When it is a question of combinations and sacrifices, those who are more likely to be remembered are Alekhine, Tal and Spassky (who, incidentally, instead of 6 e5 devised 6 ♕c2!?), and of the present-day fighters – Shirov. But, as we shall see many times, Petrosian also did not avoid a sharp fight (especially if it was imposed on him), but he always proceeded from the demands of the position – and if the position demanded sacrifices, he was prepared to make them.

6...♘d5 7 a4 e6

If 7...♗e6?! there would probably have followed not 8 axb5 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♗d5 11 e6 fxe6 12 ♕g4 h5! 13 ♕f4 ♕d6! 14 ♕f7+ ♔d7 with advantage to Black (Tolush-Smyslov, 15th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1947), but 8 ♘g5! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗d5 10 e6! fxe6 11 ♗f4 (Taimanov) with a dangerous initiative.



8 axb5

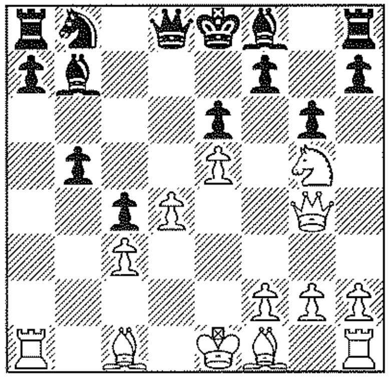
In the opinion of the theoreticians, after the unhurried 8 ♗e2 ♗b7, which was tried in two Geller-Smyslov games (18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950, and Budapest 1952) White's initiative risks coming to a standstill.

A more modern plan is 8 ♘g5 h6 (other replies are also possible) 9 ♘ge4 b4 10 ♘b1 ♗a6 11 ♕g4!? (the source game: Spassky-Mnatsakanian, Moscow 1959) or 11 ♘bd2 ♘f4! (11...c3 has also been played) 12 ♕g4 ♘d3+ 13 ♗xd3 cxd3 14 ♘d6+?! (later they switched to 14 0-0) 14...♗xd6 15 ♕xg7 ♗f8! (instead of 15...♖f8? 16 exd6 ♘d7 17 ♘f3! Sosonko-Flear, Wijk aan Zee 1987) 16 ♕xh8 ♕xd4 17 0-0 ♘d7 18 ♘f3 ♕g4! 19 ♗xh6 ♕h5 20 ♗g7 ♕xh8 21 ♗xh8 ♗h6 and Black has an excellent endgame (Fiorito-Smyslov, Buenos Aires 1990).

8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 cxb5 10 ♘g5 ♗b7 11 ♕h5 g6

After 11...♕d7, 'a move more in the spirit of Steinitz and Lasker,' (Crouch) White would probably have replied not 12 ♘xh7?! ♘c6 13 ♘xf8? (Kasparov-Kupreichik, 47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979) on account of 13...♕xd4!, but simply 12 ♗e2!, as in the game Furman-Lilienthal (Baku 1951). Later I also played this successfully against Petursson (Malta Olympiad 1980).

12 ♕g4

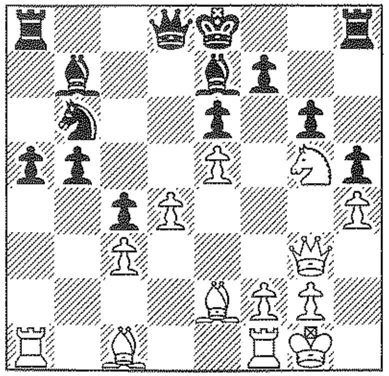


12...♗e7 13 ♗e2 (13 h4!? Petrosian-Ignatiev, Moscow 1958) **13...♘d7** (13...♗d5!?) **14 h4?!**

But here this inclusion is dubious, although we should not find fault with the initial moves in a game played half a century ago, at the dawn of modern opening theory. More problems are posed by 14 ♗f3 (Geller-Unzicker, Stockholm Interzonal 1952), when the best is 14...♕c8! (Szabo-Petrosian, Budapest 1955).

14...h5! 15 ♕g3 ♘b6 (15...♗d5!?) **16 0-0** (16 ♗f3!? with the idea of ♘e4) **16...a5!**

Smyslov apparently considered his position to be very comfortable and he was not afraid of the breakthrough in the centre. Otherwise he would have preferred 16...♗d5, when White could have replied 17 ♗a3, exchanging the important bishop – the defender of the dark squares.



Now 17 ♗a3? is bad on account of 17...b4, when it is unclear what compensation White has for the sacrificed pawn. It is curious that this position was also reached in the game Geller-Flohr, played in the same round, in which White failed to find a good plan and after 17 ♖b1? b4 18 f4 ♕d7 19 ♖a1 b3 he gradually lost: the outcome was decided by Black's passed pawns on the queenside and his control of d5.

Geller was always regarded as a sharper player and one who, far more often than Petrosian, resorted to tactics to further his aims. However, it was Petrosian, and not Geller, who made the following incredible move!

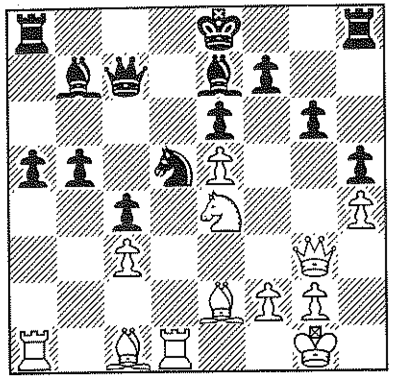
17 d5!!

The best way of complicating the play as much as possible and of maintaining White's fading initiative. This looks like a blunder, but in fact it radically changes the situation: White gets rid of his 'unnecessary' pawn on d4, which was allowing the opponent to keep the position closed. But now it is opened, and since Black cannot castle kingside (on account of ♗xh5), he has to either leave his king at e8, or castle queenside – and in either case the opening of the d-file is to White's advantage.

17...♘xd5

'An unexpected error,' wrote Petrosian soon after the game. 'Black should have played 17...♗xd5, preventing the white knight from occupying the post at e4.' However, in my view after 17...♗xd5 18 ♖d1 ♕c7 19 ♗e3! (19 ♗f3 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 0-0 is inferior) White has strong pressure: Black faces the same problem – what to do with his king?

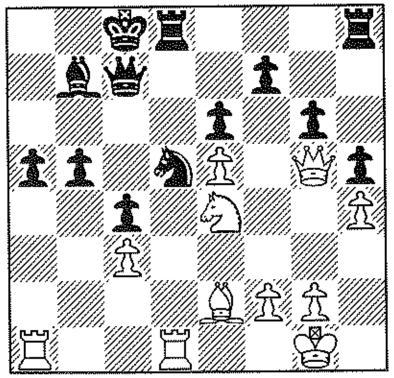
18 ♖d1 ♕c7 19 ♘e4



19...0-0-0!

'19...0-0?! 20 ♗xh5 is bad. Perhaps 19...♔f8 would have been better, aiming for ...♔g7.' (Suetin) 'Queenside castling entails considerable dangers, but it is already hard to suggest a fully satisfactory defence for Black.' (Petrosian) Even so, we shall try!

20 ♗g5! (achieving the desired exchange of bishops) **20...♗xg5 21 ♕xg5**



The culmination of the battle, overlooked by the analysts right to the very end of the 20th century.

White appears to have succeeded with at least one thing: ensuring the invasion of his knight at d6. Such a knight cannot be tolerated for long, and a rook will have to be given up for it, but this will open additional opportunities for an attack. All this is true, but...

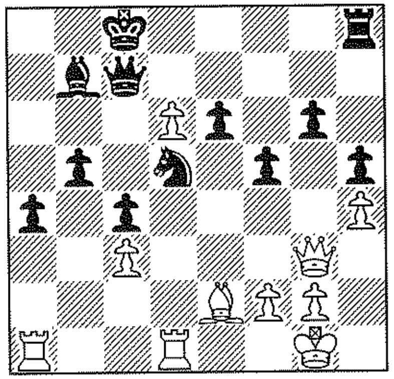
21...a4?

The sudden change in the character of the play had clearly unsettled Smyslov. He makes a 'solid', passive move – and misses an opportunity, exploiting his material advantage, to change the situation in his favour:

1) 21...b4 22 cxb4 axb4 23 ♘d6+?! ♔b8 24 ♘xb7 (24 ♘xc4? ♘c3 25 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8!) 24...♔xb7 25 ♗f3 ♕c5!, or 23 ♖d4! (Crouch) 23...f6! (not 23...♘c3? 24 ♘d6+!) 24 exf6 (24 ♘xf6? ♘c3) 24...♘b6! with a sharp, roughly equal game;

2) 21...f6!! This fantastic resource, which I discovered in the late 1990s, disrupts White's entire plan: after 22 exf6 ♘f4 23 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗f3 ♗d5! he is deprived of his main trump – the knight at d6. The position is very sharp, but the unpleasant threat of ...b5-b4 means that it can be evaluated in Black's favour.

22 ♕g3 f5 (after this Black has to sacrifice the exchange in less favourable circumstances) **23 ♘d6+ ♖xd6 24 exd6**



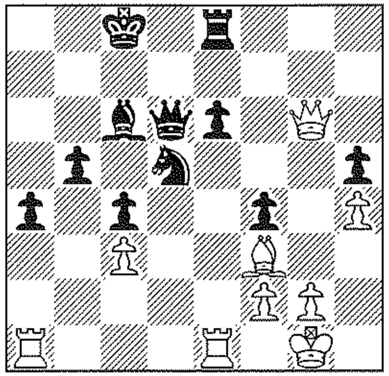
24...f4?

The decisive error. 'Better saving chances were offered by 24...♕g7! 25 ♗f3, and now not 25...♘xc3? 26 d7+!, but 25...♖d8.' (Petrosian) Although even here after 26 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 (26...exd5 27 ♕e3!) 27 ♖ab1 Black is in serious difficulties.

But for some reason no one has noticed that 25...♔d7!? 26 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 27 ♖db1 ♔c6 is more tenacious, and that 25...♕f6! 26 ♗xd5 exd5 with the idea of ...♖d8 and ...d5-d4! is altogether unclear.

25 ♕xg6 ♕xd6 26 ♗f3 ♗c6 27 ♖e1 ♖e8

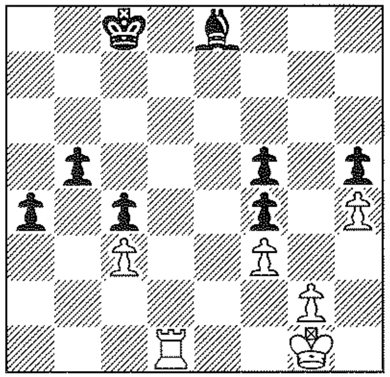
During the last ten or so moves the picture has changed sharply. Smyslov, famous for his ability to manoeuvre, and to defend, and to take account of the slightest nuances in the position, proved unready for such a sharp change in the events and ended up in a very difficult position. Petrosian convincingly converts his advantage.



28 ♗xd5!

This exchange creates a very strong impression. 28 ♖ad1!? is also possible, but Petrosian is aiming for the endgame.

28...♕xd5 29 ♖ad1! ♕f5 (forced) **30 ♕xf5 exf5 31 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 32 f3!**



Restricting the opponent's counterplay. Despite the nominally favourable material balance (bishop and two pawns for a rook – usually this is more than enough), Black's downfall is caused by the white king's march to the queenside, after which the rook is activated and Black's hopelessly weakened kingside pawns are lost.

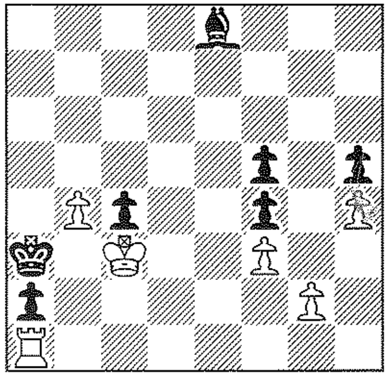
32...♔c7 33 ♔f2 ♔b6 34 ♔e2 ♔a5

Smyslov has chosen the only sensible plan – he has sent his king to the support of his a- and b-pawns. After 34...♔c5 there would also have followed 35 ♖b1!, for example: 35...a3 36 ♔d2 b4 37 cxb4+ ♔d4 38 ♖a1 c3+ 39 ♔c1 ♔e3 40 ♖xa3 ♔f2 41 ♖xc3 ♔xg2 42 ♔d2 and wins (Crouch).

35 ♖b1!

A cool manoeuvre, after which it becomes clear that Black cannot break through. But can White?! Usually in such endings the bishop is not inferior to the rook, but here a fine piece of tactics comes to White's aid, crowning his strategy.

35...a3 36 ♔d2 (with the intention of playing ♔c2) **36...b4** (if 36...♔a4, then 37 ♖b4+ ♔a5 38 ♔c2 followed by ♔b1-a2xa3 and ♖b1-e1 etc.) **37 cxb4+ ♔a4 38 ♔c3 a2 39 ♖a1 ♔a3**



40 ♔xc4!

An accurately calculated rook sacrifice. The black king is forced offside, and the poor bishop, tied to the passed b-pawn, is unable to defend the weak pawns.

40...♔b2 41 ♖e1 a1♕ 42 ♖xa1 ♔xa1 43 b5 ♗d7 44 b6 ♗c8 45 ♔d4 ♔b2 46 ♔e5 ♔c3 47 ♔xf4 ♔d4 48 ♔g5 ♔e5 49 ♔xh5 ♔f6 50 g4 ♗b7 51 ♔h6! 1-0

The fact that Petrosian's success was no accident was also confirmed in the Interzonal tournament (Stockholm 1952), where the Soviet players dominated: 1. Kotov – 16½ out of 20; 2-3. Petrosian and Taimanov – 13½; 4. Geller – 13; 5-8. Averbakh, Gligoric, Stahlberg and Szabo – 12½ etc. The Candidates tournament (Zurich 1953) even had to be expanded, by admitting an additional three foreigners. This tournament was won brilliantly by Smyslov, while Petrosian took fifth place (not at all bad for the young debutant!) and firmly established himself among the world elite.

In Zurich he employed for the first time a hitherto unknown positional procedure.

Favourite Sacrifice

Who has not heard of Petrosian's virtuoso skill in defence, his ability to avert danger, exploiting imperceptible nuances in the position, and of his favourite dish – the positional exchange sacrifice! It is the harmonious combination of such seemingly incompatible elements of strategy, as the exchange sacrifice and unhurried manoeuvring, that evidently conceals one of the secrets of his enormous practical strength and deep penetration into the secrets of chess. Since, by its nature, chess is exceptionally harmonious, and any procedures, even the most diverse – be they sacrifice of material, creation of weaknesses in the enemy camp or elimination of one's own weaknesses – have one and the same aim: to achieve harmony in one's own position and, on the contrary, to cause disharmony in the opponent's position.

Petrosian very much liked to sacrifice the exchange positionally, and he was able to do so like no one else. It has to be said that, with the development of chess, impressions of the comparative values of the pieces have changed strongly. Thus, in an interesting article in *New in Chess* (1999 No.5), Hans Ree gives an extract from an old game by Tarrasch where White is the exchange up, and even years later he considered this position to be won for him, whereas today any strong club player would unhesitatingly evaluate it in favour of Black! As an experiment the position was shown to several amateurs from an ordinary Dutch club, and they all began vying with one another to assert that Black's position was virtually won.

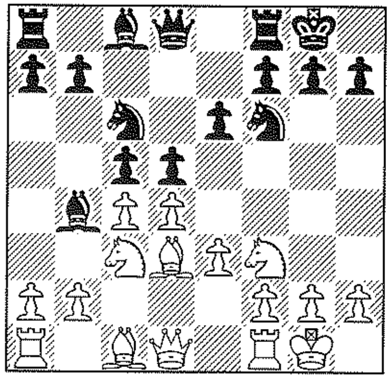
For such a revolution to occur in the minds of chess players, many decades were needed. And a key role in the reconsideration of the limits of the possible employment of the exchange sacrifice was played by Petrosian. Many made sacrifices – one can name a whole galaxy of brilliant masters who have demonstrated the triumph of mind over matter. For example, Alekhine and Tal had a highly creative approach to the evaluation of the comparative strength of pieces on the board. But the combinations of Alekhine and Tal are usually associated with the rapid development of the initiative or a direct attack on the king. On occasion Petrosian would also sacrifice the exchange for the sake of concrete, visible aims, but in the given instance we are talking about sacrifices of a quite different type, about the most difficult thing in the understanding of chess – about the effect of long-term positional factors (we will return to this many times).

Petrosian introduced the *exchange sacrifice for the sake of 'quality of position'*, where the time factor, which is so important in the play of Alekhine and Tal, plays hardly any role. Even today very few players can operate confidently at the board with such abstract concepts. Before Petrosian no one had studied this (except, in the most general form, Nimzowitsch – incidentally, *My System* was the young Tigran's reference book). By sacrificing the exchange 'just like that', for certain long-term advantages, in positions with disrupted material balance, he discovered latent resources that few were capable of seeing and properly evaluating.

I will illustrate what has been said with the famous game Reshevsky-Petrosian, played at the start of the Zurich Candidates tournament in 1953. Although it eventually ended in a draw, it made an enormous contribution to developing an understanding of the depth of chess.

Game 2
S.Reshevsky-T.Petrosian
Candidates Tournament,
Zurich 1953, 2nd round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E58

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6



8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 b6?!

'It is thought that this move gives Black a cramped game, but if this sort of "cramped" game appeals to a player, he will achieve better results in it than in a different "free" game,' writes Bronstein in his famous book on this tournament. The main line is 9...dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7 or the immediate 9...♕c7, not allowing ♘e5.

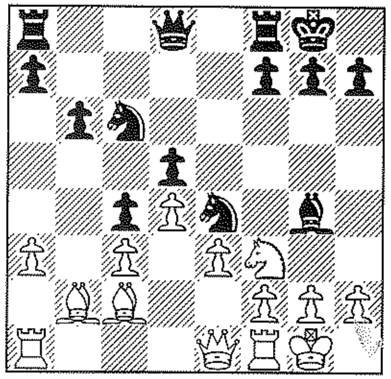
10 cxd5 (Black threatened ...♗a6) **10...exd5 11 ♗b2**

In the 20th round, Taimanov, a great expert on the Nimzo-Indian Defence, played the energetic 11 ♘e5! against Petrosian, and after 11...♕c7 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 f3 ♗e6 14 ♕e1 ♘d7 15 e4 c4?! (according to Bronstein, 15...f5 16 e5 b5 with the idea of ...♘b6-c4 was better) 16 ♗c2 f5 17 e5 ♖f7 18 a4 a5 19 f4 White gained a clear advantage and scored an excellent win.

'Perhaps it was this game,' Petrosian recalled in the mid-1960s, 'that became the starting point for the opening direction that I largely adhered to: not to allow the opponent to play his favourite schemes. In almost any position the boundless possibilities of chess enable a new or at least a little-studied continuation to be found.'

11...c4 12 ♗c2 ♗g4 13 ♕e1! ♘e4!

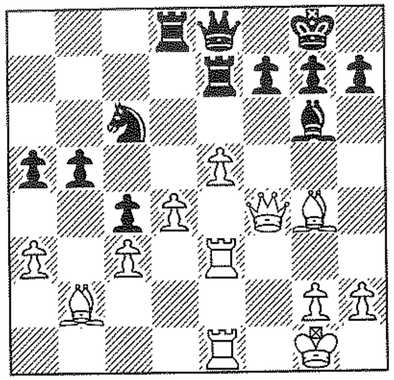
'In the event of 13...♗xf3 14 gxf3 ♘h5 White had the possibility of systematically strengthening his position by 15 f4!, f2-f3, ♕f2, ♖ae1, ♗c1, ♔h1, ♖g1, e3-e4 and so on. Therefore Petrosian continues on the same logical course, reckoning that, since he has not made any moves that are dubious or disrupt the equilibrium, it should not lead to a lost position.' (Bronstein)



14 ♘d2 ♘xd2 15 ♕xd2 ♗h5 16 f3 ♗g6 17 e4 ♕d7 18 ♖ae1 dxe4 19 fxe4 ♖fe8 20 ♕f4 (20 a4?! ♘e5! and ...♘d3 with an equal game)

20...b5 21 ♗d1!? ♖e7 22 ♗g4 ♕e8 23 e5 a5 24 ♖e3 ♖d8 25 ♖fe1

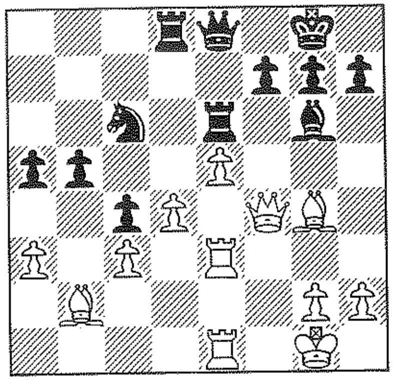
Since after both 25 h4 (Bronstein) and 25 ♗f3 Black has the good reply 25...f6!, Crouch suggests 25 ♖ef3!?



At first sight, White's chances are preferable. He has the two bishops, and although the one at b2 is passive, it is free to come into play via c1. Black's pawn majority on the queenside is ephemeral (the move ...b5-b4 doesn't give anything in particular), whereas White is ready for activity in the centre. He can first strengthen his position by the advance of the h-pawn, but Reshevsky's main aim is the e5-e6 breakthrough. This threat is highly unpleasant and it is not altogether clear how to combat it. But on a close examination of the placing of the black pieces and the features of the position, it will be noticed that its evaluation could change if the black knight were able to occupy the impregnable d5-square. Here the knight not only blocks the d4-pawn, but also takes away some good squares from the white pieces (for example, f4 from the queen).

However, it is not so easy for the knight to reach d5: for this the rook has to move from e7. For example, 25...♖a7!? – after 26 e6 f6 27 ♗f3 ♘e7 everything is still far from clear; in any event, there is no apparent way of forcibly exploiting the powerful passed pawn: Black retains control of the light squares, and even if the pawn should advance to e7, the g6-bishop can come to the rescue. But this would have been falling in with White's plans! And Petrosian makes a move which many players, unfamiliar with this game, would consider a blunder and at which the computer would 'laugh its heart out'.

25...♖e6!!



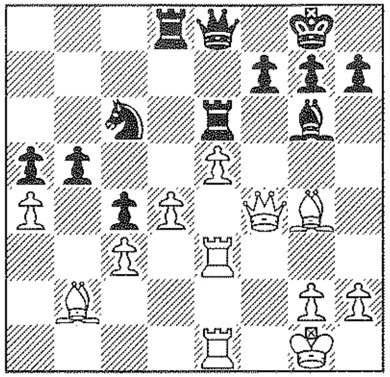
'This purely positional sacrifice (a quiet move, without any checks or obvious threats!) made an indelible impression on me.' (Tal) The move is indeed incredible: the rook simply places itself en prise. For the sake of what?! In order to block the advance of the e-pawn and also to open the way for the knight to d5.

However, let us ponder over the position and ask ourselves: why, in fact, should a rook be stronger than a minor piece here? After all, a rook requires open lines, it needs to have something to attack, whereas minor pieces require strong points and pawn support. In the given instance there is a shortage of open lines, and it is no longer possible to prevent the knight from reaching d5, where it will be impregnable. In addition, from d5 the knight will be attacking the c3-pawn, and if the white bishop does not manage to switch to d2, it will remain 'vegetating' at b2. It is practically impossible to break Black's light-square defences: White simply does not have sufficient resources to do so.

Thus, when this staggering move is made on the board, we can understand perfectly well the reasons that induced Black to give up the exchange, and we can grasp the deep strategic sense of what has occurred. Nevertheless, I think that even today not everyone would have decided on such a sacrifice. And yet, possessing the invaluable experience of Petrosian, and other outstanding grandmasters who came later, and having in mind widely known ideas and games, it is far easier to make such moves. Even so, they do not cease to surprise!

It would appear that Reshevsky was also slightly shocked: he decided to delay the capture of the rook, thinking that all the same it would not run away.

26 a4?!



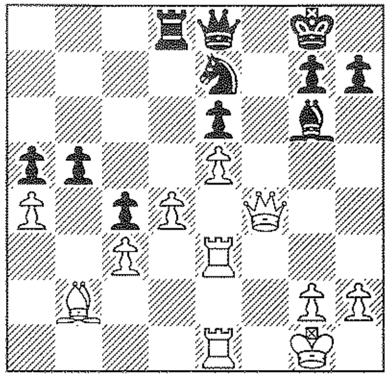
An attempt, by creating tension on the queenside, to open lines and exploit the exchange advantage (for example, after 26...b4?! 27 d5! ♖xd5 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 ♕xc4). Although, in my opinion, the immediate 26 ♗xe6 was better (but not 26 h4?! ♘e7! and ...♘d5), and if, as in the game, 26...fxe6, then after 27 ♖g3! (less convincing is 27 h4 ♘e7! 28 ♖g3 ♘f5 29 ♖h3 ♗h5 or 28 ♖f3 ♘d5 29 ♕g5 ♗d3) White begins preparing an attack on the king. For example: 27...♘e7 28 ♖f1 ♘d5 29 ♕g5 ♕e7 (after 29...♖d7 30 h4 ♗d3 31 ♖f2 it is even harder to create counterplay) 30 ♗c1! ♕xg5 31 ♗xg5 ♖b8 32 ♗d2 (the bishop has managed to switch to where it is needed) 32...♗d3 33 ♖f2 and Black has a difficult endgame.

Therefore here 26...♕xe6! is correct. After the possible 27 ♖g3 ♘e7 28 h4 ♘d5 29 ♕g5 ♖d7 30 h5 h6 31 ♕h4 ♗d3 the problem of the b2-bishop cannot be solved immediately, but White retains some advantage: 32 ♗c1 ♘xc3 33 ♕f6 ♕xf6 34 exf6 ♘e2+ 35 ♖xe2 ♗xe2 36 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 37 ♗xh6 b4. So it would appear that the immediate 26 ♗xe6 would have promised him more.

26...♘e7!

With the threat of ...♘d5. Soon it transpires that White has clearly gained nothing from the opening of lines: the rooks remain passive and to bring the bishop into play via a3, which Reshevsky was dreaming of, is not possible.

27 ♗xe6 fxe6



28 ♕f1!

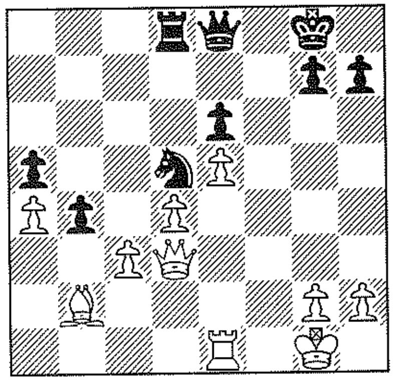
Already planning to return the exchange. 'If 28 ♕f2, then 28...♘d5 29 ♖f3 b4 is unpleasant.' (Bronstein)

Also after 28 ♖f3 it is possible to play 28...♘d5 29 ♕c1! (Crouch's move 29 ♕d2 is weaker on account of the same reply 29...b4) 29...b4! 30 cxb4 axb4 31 ♕xc4 ♕xa4 32 ♖a1 ♕d7, or even 32...♕e8 33 ♖a7 ♖c8 34 ♕a6 h6 35 ♖g3 ♔h7 – objectively White stands better, but he has no real winning chances. What tell are the same long-term factors that Petrosian was relying on: the unopposed light-squared bishop and the eternal knight at d5 are together not inferior to the rook and the half-asleep bishop at b2, which is forced to keep watch on the passed b-pawn.

However, the immediate 28...b4! 29 ♖ef1 ♘d5 30 ♕g5 ♖b8 is stronger, and 31 ♖f8+? ♕xf8 32 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 is unfavourable for White. Here Black is altogether invulnerable: White is unable to attack his weaknesses and he has essentially lost the strategic battle. So Reshevsky decided to return the exchange in good time, thereby admitting the correctness of Petrosian's idea.

28...♘d5 29 ♖f3 ♗d3 30 ♖xd3 cxd3 31 ♕xd3 b4!

'Reshevsky's clever zigzags and Petrosian's iron logic make this game one of the adornments of the tournament. Now White faces a difficult psychological problem: whether to exchange on b4, which will almost certainly lead to a draw, or to advance his pawn and drive back the knight, obtaining chances of winning... and of losing.' (Bronstein)



32 cxb4

In time-trouble Reshevsky plays it simple. 'After 32 c4 ♘b6 the white pawns would have been blocked, whereas Black's would have become extremely dangerous: 33 ♖c1 ♘xa4 34 ♗a1 ♕c6, or 33 d5 exd5 34 c5 ♘xa4 35 ♗d4 ♖c8 36 ♕f3,' (Bronstein) 36...♘xc5! etc.

32...axb4

32...♘xb4 was also possible. Now things quickly end in a draw: White's extra pawn is fully compensated by the powerful knight at d5.

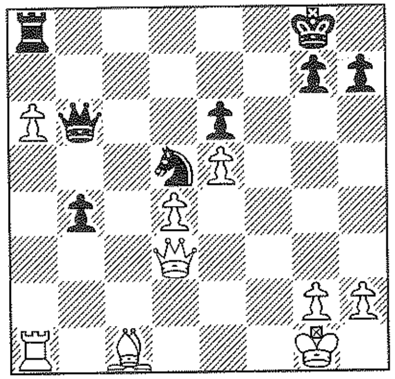
33 a5 ♖a8 34 ♖a1 ♕c6 35 ♗c1

If 35 a6?! Black had 35...♘f4 36 ♕f1 (it is no better to play 36 ♕d2 g5 or 36 ♕f3?! ♕xf3 37 gxf3 ♘d3 38 ♗c1 b3 Crouch) 36...g5 with the unpleasant threat of ...♕c2!

35...♕c7!

Black is not tempted by 35...♖xa5? 36 ♖xa5 ♕xc1+ 37 ♕f1 ♕e3+ 38 ♔h1 (Bronstein), since here the vulnerability of his own king causes his downfall.

36 a6 ♕b6



37 ♗d2

If 37 h3 (Crouch), then simply 37...♘c7!, picking up the a-pawn. Or 37 ♕c4 ♘c7! 38 a7 ♖xa7 39 ♖xa7 ♕xa7 40 ♕xb4 ♘d5 with equality.

37...b3 38 ♕c4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 ♖b1 ♔h8 (40...♕xa6!? 41 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 42 ♖xb2 ♖a4 and ...♖xd4 with a draw) **41 ♗e1 ½-½**

The sealed move (it was incorrect to play 41 ♗c3? ♕xa6 42 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 43 ♗xb2 ♖b6). A draw was agreed without resuming in view of 41...♖xa6 42 ♕c8+ ♔h7 43 ♕c2+ ♔g8 44 ♕xb2 ♕xb2 45 ♖xb2. Black's strategic idea fully justified itself!

After Zurich, Petrosian became truly invincible, remaining undefeated in two successive USSR Championships (including the 22nd, a Zonal event) and then also the Interzonal tournament of the new cycle (Gothenburg 1955). The Candidates tournament in Amsterdam (1956) developed into another triumph for Soviet players: 1. Smyslov, 2. Keres, 3-7. Bronstein, Geller, Petrosian, Spassky and the Hungarian Szabo. But chess life was so arranged that 'iron Tigran' had to begin the next world championship cycle... from a semi-final of the USSR Championship. A confident victory there was the start of a series of brilliant performances by Petrosian on the lengthy path to the world chess crown.

In the final of the Zonal, 25th USSR Championship (Riga 1958) he as usual went through undefeated, finishing second in a very sharp struggle – half a point behind Mikhail Tal, who overtook his rival only thanks to an incredible last-round win over Spassky (*Game No.50*). It need hardly be said how important was the Tal-Petrosian game, played in the middle of the tournament. In this fierce battle another classic positional exchange sacrifice took place.

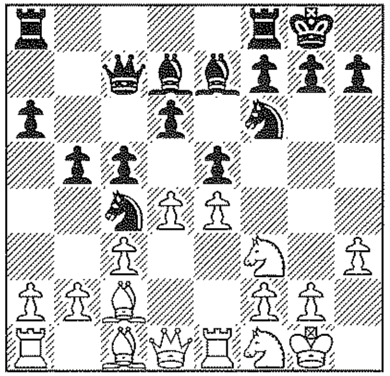
Game 3

M.Tal-T.Petrosian

25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958

Ruy Lopez C97

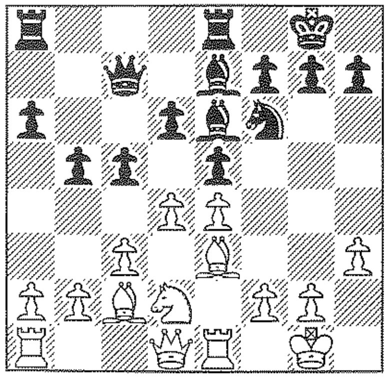
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♗d7 13 ♘f1 ♘c4



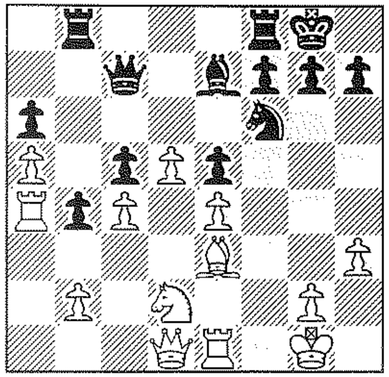
14 ♘e3

A harmless alternative is 14 b3 ♘b6 15 ♘e3 c4 16 bxc4 ♘xc4 17 ♘xc4 bxc4 18 a4 ♖fe8 with equal play, as in the games Korchnoi-Petrosian (Curaçao Candidates 1962) and Velimirovic-Petrosian (Rio de Janeiro Interzonal 1979). Against Tigran Vartanovich I once tried 14 d5!? ♘b6 15 g4 (Banja Luka 1979).

14...♘xe3 15 ♗xe3 ♗e6?! (it is more accurate to play 15...♖fc8! Karpov-Petrosian, Milan, 1st matchgame 1975) **16 ♘d2 ♖fe8**



17 f4! ♖ad8 (17...cxd4 18 cxd4 ♖ac8 19 ♗d3 is also advantageous to White) **18 fxe5 dxe5 19 d5 ♗d7 20 c4 ♖b8 21 a4 b4 22 a5! ♖f8 23 ♗a4 ♗xa4 24 ♖xa4**



'White has a great positional advantage. He effectively has an extra, protected passed pawn at d5, and in the endgame it may play a decisive role. Black could have satisfied himself with passive defence – ...♗d6, ...♘d7, ...f7-f6, ...♖f7, ...♖bf8 and so on, but against good play by White he would sooner or later have ended up in a difficult position. And here I managed to devise a rather interesting plan of defence.' (Petrosian)

24...♖bd8 25 ♕f3 ♖d6! (the only chance is this unexpected switching of the rook to the sixth rank) **26 ♘b3**

The knight sinks its teeth into the weak c5-

pawn, and White's storming of the kingside seems only a question of time.

26...♘d7 27 ♖aa1 ♖g6 28 ♖f1 ♗d6

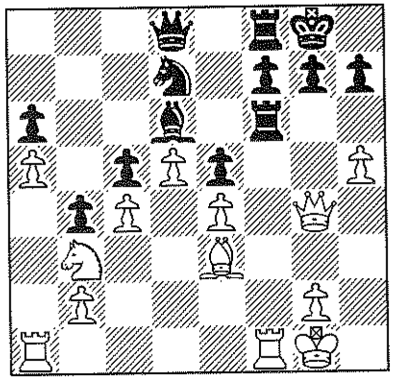
I don't know if Petrosian was already considering the possible exchange sacrifice, but the ...♖b8-d8-d6-g6 manoeuvre has at least given Black some counterplay. In order to drive the rook from its favourable post, White has to advance his h-pawn, weakening his king's defences.

29 h4 ♕d8 30 h5

If 30 ♕h3, then 30...h5! 31 ♖f5 ♕c8 32 ♕f3 (32 ♖xh5?! ♘f6!) 32...♘f6 is unclear.

30...♖f6 31 ♕g4

It only remains for White to play g2-g3 and exchange the audacious rook at f6, after which everything will go smoothly. 'I considered my position to be won,' writes Tal. 'Indeed, White has prepared an attack on the kingside, while on the queenside, instead of counterplay, Black merely has weaknesses. But here there was occasion to remember Nimzowitsch and his theory of blockade.'



31...♖f4!!

A brilliant move! And an already familiar idea: the rook places itself en prise to a minor piece. The exchange sacrifice (for not even a pawn!) enables a radical reassessment to be made of the comparative values of the pieces.

32 ♗xf4?!

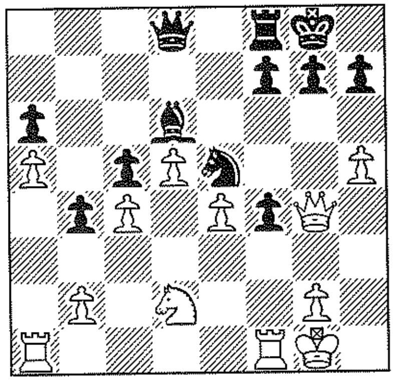
This capture leads to the unexpectedly sharp activation of both the inert bishop at d6 (which begins eyeing the h2-square) and the despondent knight at d7 (which acquires the splendid e5-square). Now it is no longer the c5-pawn that is weak, but rather the pawns at c4 and e4. In addition, it transpires that the h-pawn has advanced too far and that the white king is a potential target. In short, a complete change of scene.

'Of course, if Tal had fully realised what the winning of the exchange would lead to, he would have been satisfied with the win of a pawn: 32 ♖xf4! exf4 33 ♗xf4. I thought that this situation was better for Black than play with equal material, but in a very cramped position.' (Petrosian)

However, a rough analysis shows that here too White would have retained an appreciable advantage: 33...♗xf4?! 34 ♕xf4 ♕e7 35 h6! g6 36 ♖f1; 33...♕e7 34 h6 g6 35 ♕g3 (35 ♗xd6!? ♕xd6 36 ♖f1) 35...♗xf4? (35...♘e5) 36 ♕xf4 f5 37 ♖e1 ♘e5 38 ♖e2 ♕c7 39 exf5 ♖xf5 40 ♕e3 and wins; 33...♘f6 34 ♕f3 ♗xf4? 35 ♕xf4 ♘xh5 36 ♕e3! ♕h4 37 ♘xc5 ♖e8 (37...♘g3 38 ♖e1) 38 ♖f1 ♘g3 39 ♖f3 ♘xe4 40 ♖f4 and wins; 33...♘e5 34 ♕g3 ♖e8 35 h6 g6 36 ♖c1 ♕c7 37 ♖f1! ♘xc4? (37...♕d8) 38 ♗xd6 ♘xd6 39 ♖f6 ♖d8 40 ♕e5 and wins.

Even so, Black would have retained some counter-threats, and this might not have appealed to Tal, who also, by his own admission, 'at the time, on account of my youth, thought that one should always win the exchange.'

32...exf4 33 ♘d2 ♘e5

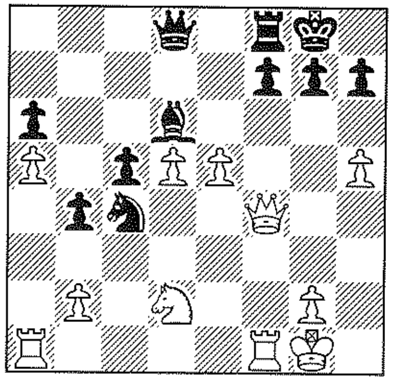


The position has become much sharper and White must now play accurately, which is rather difficult. Any experienced player knows how a change in the character of the play influences your psychological mood. Up to here, individual moves did not play a decisive role and in the main they were merely aimed at implementing the plan in general form. But now concrete calculation is required, and although Tal did this brilliantly, the sharp turn unsettled him. In addition, Mikhail Nekhemevich did not like defending.

34 ♕xf4?

A mistake. It was correct to play 34 ♕f5 or 34 ♕h3 f3 35 ♖f2! (but not 35 gxf3 ♘d3 36 f4 ♘xf4 37 ♕g4 ♕f6, sharpening the play), when White's advantage is undisputed. In this case the exchange sacrifice would have proved insufficient – so difficult was the initial position for Black.

34...♘xc4 (just one flippant move by White has changed the evaluation by almost 180 degrees) **35 e5**



35...♘xe5!

Without hesitation retaining an ultra-powerful position in the centre. Possibly Tal was hoping for 35...♘xd2?! 36 exd6 ♘xf1 37 ♖xf1 h6 (37...♕xa5 38 h6) 38 ♖e1 – the d-pawns are only nominally doubled, but they are in fact passed!

36 ♘e4 h6 37 ♖ae1?

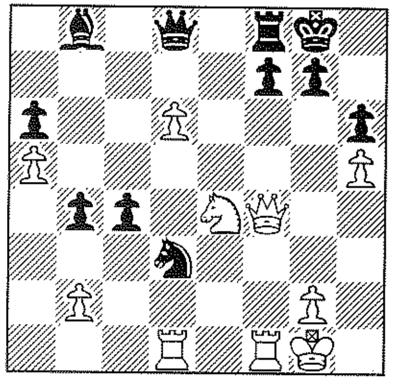
After 37 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 Black would have supported his knight by ...f7-f6 and would have had an impregnable fortress plus counterplay with ...c5-c4. But, of course, White should not have allowed that which occurred in the game. 37 b3!? came into consideration.

37...♗b8! 38 ♖d1 c4

Threatening ...♗a7+ and ...♘d3 with a mating attack. Black's position is already better – that which was mentioned in the notes to White's 32nd move begins to come true. The white king is in danger of coming to grief.

39 d6! (39 ♘f2 was passive: 39...♕xa5 40 d6 ♕c5!) **39...♘d3**

In the time scramble it was hard to decide whether first 39...♗a7+!? wouldn't have been better. Then there could have followed 40 ♔h1 ♘d3 41 ♖xd3! (but not 41 ♕g4? f5, as in the game) 41...cxd3 42 ♘g3 ♕xa5 43 ♘f5 with sufficient counterplay, or even 40 ♘f2 ♘d3 41 ♕xc4 ♘xf2 (41...♘xb2!? 42 ♕xa6!) 42 ♖xf2 ♕xa5 43 d7 ♗xf2+ 44 ♔xf2 ♖d8 45 ♔g1 ♕xh5 (45...♕b6+ 46 ♔h1) 46 ♖d5 ♕g6 47 ♕xb4 and the powerful passed d-pawn guarantees White against defeat.



40 ♕g4?

The last move before the time control, and evidently a losing one. 40 ♕e3 was essential, for example: 40...♘xb2 41 ♖d5! ♕d7 42 ♘c5 ♕c6 43 ♖ff5! (43...♗xd6 44 ♕d4), 40...♕d7 41 ♖xd3 (41 ♔h1!?) 41...cxd3 42 ♕xd3 ♗a7+ 43 ♘f2, or 40...f5 41 ♕d4! (it is dangerous to play 41 ♘f2 ♕xd6 42 ♘xd3 ♕h2+ 43 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 44 ♔e2 ♕xh5+ 45 ♕f3 ♕e8+) 41...fxe4 42 ♕xc4+ ♔h8 43 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 44 ♕xe4 ♗a7+ 45 ♔h2 ♘f2 46 ♕e7! ♕f4+ 47 g3 ♕f3

48 ♕e8+ or 48 d7 with a draw.

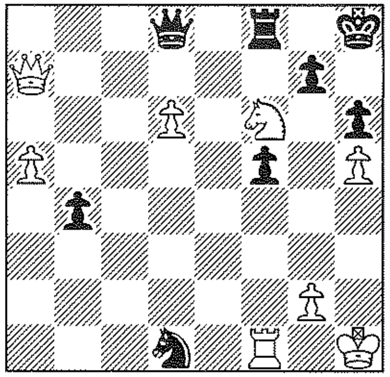
40...♗a7+ 41 ♔h1 f5

The sealed move. After the adjournment there were still some fascinating events to come.

42 ♘f6+!

Of course, Tal does not miss a tactical chance. 42 ♖xf5? was totally unsuitable: 42...♖xf5 43 ♕xf5 ♕h4+ 44 ♕h3 ♕xe4 45 d7 ♕e7 and wins.

42...♔h8 (not 42...♕xf6?? 43 ♕xc4+ and ♕xd3) **43 ♕xc4 ♘xb2 44 ♕xa6 ♘xd1 45 ♕xa7**



45...♕xd6?

After 45...♘c3! 46 ♕e7 gxf6 Black would have had excellent chances of converting his extra piece, although White could still have stirred up trouble:

1) 47 ♕e3 ♖f7! (it is weaker to play 47...♔h7? 48 ♕d3! ♕d7 49 ♖xf5 ♔h8 50 a6! ♕e6 51 d7 or 48...♘e4 49 ♖xf5 ♖e8 50 d7! ♖e7 51 ♖d5 with domination, ensuring a draw) 48 a6 (48 ♕xh6+ ♖h7) 48...♕xd6 49 a7 ♕d8 50 ♕xh6+ (or 50 ♖a1 ♕a8 51 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 52 ♕e3 ♖g7 53 ♕f3 ♘e4) 50...♔g8 51 ♕e3 ♖g7 52 ♖xf5 ♕a8 53 ♖f3 ♕xa7 54 ♕e6+ ♕f7, winning;

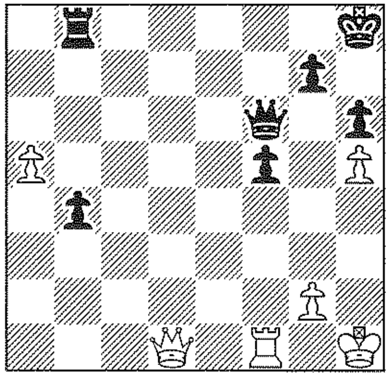
2) 47 ♖xf5 ♕xe7 48 dxe7 ♖e8 49 ♖xf6, and now not 49...♖xe7?! 50 a6! ♘b5 51 ♖b6! ♖e5 52 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 53 ♖g6+ ♔f8 54 ♖g4 with a draw, or 50...♔g7 51 ♖g6+! ♔f7 (51...♔h7 52 ♖b6 ♘d5? 53 ♖b7 ♖g7 54 a7!) 52 ♖xh6 ♘b5 53 ♖b6 ♖e5 54 a7 ♘xa7 55 ♖xb4, eliminating all the pawns with a draw, but only 49...♔g7! 50 ♖b6 ♖xe7 51 ♖xb4 ♖e5 52 g4 ♖xa5 53 ♖b7+ ♔f6 54 ♖b6+ ♔g5 55 ♖g6+ ♔f4 etc. (56 ♖xh6 ♔g3!), or 50 ♖g6+ ♔f7 51 ♖xh6 (51 ♖b6 ♘d5 52 ♖b5 ♔e6 53 a6 ♖xe7 54 ♖b7 ♖e8 55 a7 ♖a8) 51...♘a4!! and ...b4-b3.

It is this decisive knight manoeuvre (a non-human move!) that Petrosian might not have seen in his adjournment analysis. Otherwise it is hard to understand why he didn't play 45...♘c3!

46 ♕d7!

A very strong reply, after which in the end the resourceful Tal gains a draw. But it is interesting to look at the further errors by the two players: no one has seriously analysed this part of the game, and several important moments have remained off screen.

46...♕xf6 47 ♕xd1 ♖b8! (not 47...♕a6 48 ♖f4! ♕xa5 49 ♕d6, picking up the b4-pawn)

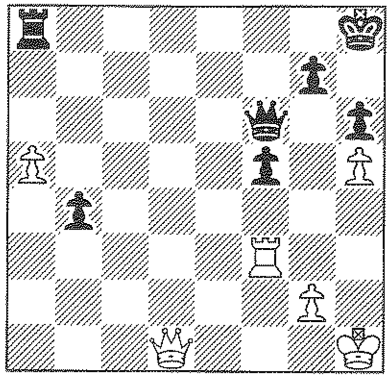


48 ♖f3?

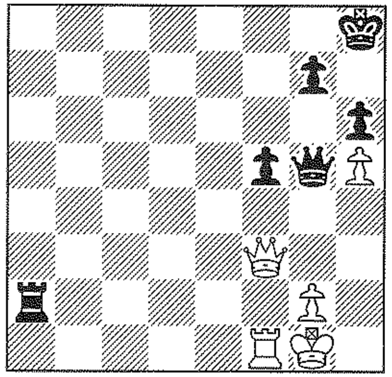
A serious mistake. Drawing chances would have been retained by 48 ♕d3 b3 49 a6, aiming to exchange the a-pawn for the b-pawn.

48...♖a8?

Returning the compliment. After 48...♖b5! the sorry position of the white king would have proved decisive: 49 ♕e1 (49 ♕a4 ♕h4+ or 49 ♖b3 ♖xa5 50 ♖xb4 ♖a1 etc.) 49...♔h7 50 ♖b3 ♖xa5 51 ♕xb4 ♖a1+ 52 ♔h2 ♖f1. But now an objectively drawn endgame is reached with three pawns against two on the same flank, although the mistakes do not end here.



49 ♕e1 ♖xa5 50 ♕xb4 ♖e5 (or 50...♕e5 51 ♖f1 ♖a1 52 ♖xa1 ♕xa1+ 53 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 54 ♔h3 ♕e3+ 55 ♔h2 ♔h7 56 ♕c4 with a draw) **51 ♕f4 ♔h7 52 ♔h2 ♖d5 53 ♖f1 ♕g5 54 ♕f3 ♖e5 55 ♔g1 ♖c5 56 ♕f2 ♖e5 57 ♕f3 ♖a5 58 ♔h2 ♔h8 59 ♔g1 ♖a2**



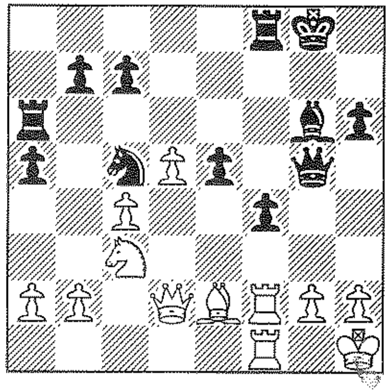
60 ♕d5? (for an instant leaving the e3-square undefended) **60...♖c2?**

Again Petrosian could have won, but for this a knowledge was required of higher computer geometry, which was then unknown: 60...♕e3+! 61 ♔h2 ♖a4! 62 ♕d8+ ♔h7 63 ♖xf5 ♖d4! (very pretty!) 64 ♖d5 ♖g4 65 ♖d3 ♕e5+ 66 ♔g1 (66 ♔h1 ♕e2 67 ♕d5 ♖g5; 66 g3 ♖g5!) 66...♕e4! 67 ♕d5 (or 67 g3 ♖g5 68 ♖b3 ♖d5) 67...♖xg2+ 68 ♔h1 ♕xd5 69 ♖xd5 ♖g5! and wins. All this was 'personally' verified by the rigorous Junior and Fritz.

61 ♕a8+ ♔h7 62 ♕f3 ♖c1?! (62...♖c5 was nevertheless stronger) **63 ♖xc1 ♕xc1+ 64 ♔h2 ♕c7+ 65 ♔h3 ♕e5 66 g4! fxg4+ 67 ♔xg4 ♕g5+ 68 ♔h3 ♕f6 69 ♕e4+ ♔g8 70 ♕e8+ ♕f8 71 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 72 ♔g4 ♔f7 73 ♔f5 ½-½**

The following example on this same theme was prefaced by Petrosian with these words: 'I repeat, that the first and main difficulty in making a positional exchange sacrifice is a psychological caution: after all, you have to give up a rook for a minor piece. The second difficulty is that the exchange is given up when this is not forced by circumstances. Therefore you must anticipate beforehand, in good time, how events will develop and take the necessary measures.'

Game 4
T.Petrosian-S.Gligoric
Varna Olympiad 1962



26 ♗f3! (a clever resource in a difficult position) **26...♖af6**

If 26...e4 there follows 27 ♕d4! 'The e4-pawn is attacked, and if 27...♘d3 White sacrifices the exchange. Or if 27...♕e7, then 28 ♖e2, with a very sharp, tense game.' (Petrosian)

27 ♖e1! (the only chance; 27 ♖e2? ♗d3 28 ♘e4 ♘xe4 29 ♕xd3 ♘g3+!) **27...♘d3 28 ♖fe2 ♘xe1 29 ♕xe1 ♖e8 30 c5**

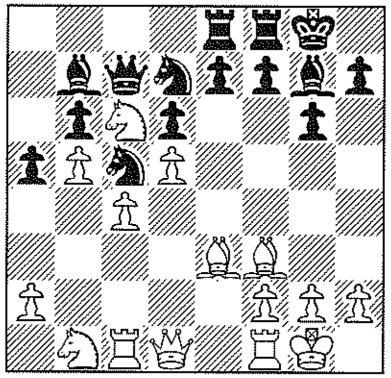
'Black is a clear exchange to the good, but it is not felt at all.' (Petrosian)

30...♖ff8 31 ♘e4 ½-½

Draw agreed on Gligoric's proposal.

I will give another instructive example, which, as Tigran Vartanovich stated, was very interesting in the purely psychological sense.

Game 5
L.Portisch-T.Petrosian
San Antonio 1972



24 ♗g5?! (it was more logical to increase the pressure by 24 ♖e1, then ♗f4 or ♗g5) **24...e5!!**

A surprise! 'After my reply Portisch thought for about 10 minutes and all this time he kept looking at me. He couldn't make out whether I had sacrificed the exchange or blundered. In the end he decided that I had blundered, took the exchange and... ended up in a bad position.' (Petrosian)

25 ♗e7?! (or 25 dxe6 fxe6! with a comfortable game) **25...f5 26 ♗xf8 ♘xf8**

'During the last two moves the situation has changed sharply. White has a rook for a bishop, but no active play, because all the lines are blocked and rooks are only worth something when they stand on open files. After ...e7-e5 the knight at c6 looks very well placed, but that is all. In some cases Black will have an extra piece in play.' (Petrosian)

27 ♗e2 ♗h6?! (first 27...h5! was better) **28 ♖c2 ♗c8 29 ♘c3 ♘fd7 30 ♖e1 ♘f6 31 ♗f1 f4?!**

According to Petrosian, a prophylactic move such as 31...♔h8! would have been more unpleasant for White.

32 ♖ce2 ♖f8 33 ♘a4 ♘xa4 34 ♕xa4 ♘d7 (forestalling the c4-c5 breakthrough) **35 ♘e7+** (Black overlooked this simple defence) **35...♔h8 36 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 37 ♕a3 ♘c5 38 ♕f3 ♕f5 ½-½**

Thus, the positional exchange sacrifice was one of the prominent elements of the inimitable Petrosian style. But what comprised its basis? Let us see how the 9th world champion handled the opening.

Miracles of Prophylaxis

Since the time of Botvinnik it had become evident that the initial stage of the game demanded thorough study. Without solid opening preparation it was impossible to count on any serious success in professional events, and practically every leading player made his contribution to the development of opening theory. It is interesting to follow how much opening theory has progressed from the late 1940s to the present day – during this half century truly incredible progress has been achieved, and is still continuing today.

Here Botvinnik can be safely called the pioneer. Although Alekhine, Euwe and Keres also did much fruitful work in the field of the opening, it was Botvinnik who was distinguished by his large-scale, global approach. He developed systems and entire trends, along which chess thinking later progressed. Smyslov, although this has not received due recognition, was also distinguished by his highly non-routine approach, and many opening tendencies are associated with his discoveries.

Petrosian did not perhaps leave such a global mark on the development of chess theory, like Botvinnik or Smyslov, but on the other hand he created two systems, typical of his style, in the King's Indian and Queen's Indian Defences, linked by one thread – *the idea of prophylaxis*. It is in his approach to the solution of opening problems that the features of Petrosian's chess ideology, his general positional conceptions, are clearly seen.

Petrosian's system in the King's Indian Defence, which to this day remains a rather unpleasant weapon in White's hands, is defined by an early d4-d5 and, chiefly, by ♗c1-g5, pinning the knight at f6. This move looks pointless and 70, 60 or even 50 years ago it would hardly have enjoyed the particular respect of the experts. But in the 1950s, views on chess, on opening theory, and in general on basic chess reference points, changed markedly. It appears to be not so difficult for Black to eliminate the pin and carry out the key idea for the given pawn structure: move the knight from f6 (to e8, d7 or h5) and advance ...f7-f5. However, in so doing he loses time and begins to experience discomfort: firstly, he has to weaken himself with ...h7-h6 and then either play ...g6-g5, seriously weakening the light squares, for which he will have to pay sooner or later, or else move his queen to e8 or d7, which somewhat disrupts the coordination of his forces.

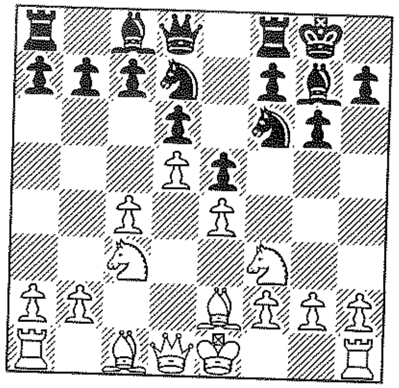
Of course, after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d6 4 e4 ♗g7 one can also mention the Averbakh Variation – 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♗g5, as well as 5 h3 0-0 6 ♗g5 (or 6 ♘f3 and ♗g5) with roughly the same motifs, but Petrosian's plan with 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5 and ♗g5 has proved to be far more popular and uncommonly enduring. Today, thanks to the numerous games played and the development of system's theory, this idea of long-term prophylaxis against ...f7-f5 is now very standard, but then, in the 1950s, it was a genuine discovery.

Here is the source game, in which Petrosian, as he himself put it, 'was able to demonstrate in practice that the bishop sortie to g5 is full of venom.' This occurred in 1954 on board 1 of the USSR Team Championship, where Tigran Vartanovich helped his native 'Spartak' to become champions of the country.

Game 6
T.Petrosian-A.Suetin
USSR Team Cup, Riga 1954
King's Indian Defence E94

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♗g7 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5 ♘bd7

Or 7...♘a6 – *Game No.9.*



8 0-0

Later on the author of the variation began playing 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4, for example:

1) 9...g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5 11 0-0 a5 12 ♘e1 ♘f4 13 ♘c2 (13 ♗g4!?) 13...♘c5 14 ♘e3 ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe2+ 16 ♕xe2 f5 17 f3 f4! 18 c5 fxe3 (18...fxg3 19 hxg3! and 20 g4) 19 ♕xe3 ♗f5 20 ♖ac1 with a slight but enduring advantage (Petrosian-Suetin, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958);

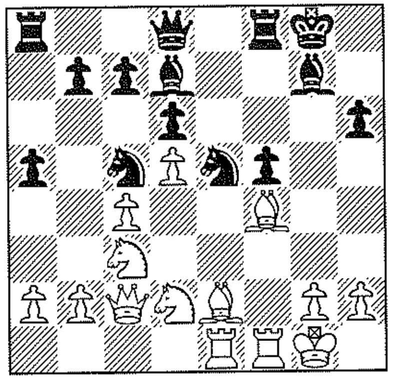
2) 9...a6 (Fischer's plan) 10 ♘d2 ♕e8 11 0-0 ♘h7 12 b4 ♘g5 13 ♖c1 f5 14 f3 ♕e7 15 ♔h1! ♘f6 16 c5 ♘h5 17 c6! b6 18 exf5 gxf5 19 g3! with a clear advantage (Petrosian-Gligoric, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959).

8...♘c5 9 ♕c2 a5 10 ♗g5 (10 ♘d2 ♗h6!) **10...h6 11 ♗e3** (here, having forced ...h7-h6, it is possible to retreat to e3, since 11...♘g4 is parried by the sharp variation 12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 h3 ♘f6 14 ♘xe5 ♘xd5 15 cxd5 ♗xe5 16 f4 ♗d4+ 17 ♔h2) **11...♘fd7**

'Suetin preferred a well-tried and, it has to be said, routine continuation, with Boleslavsky's recommendation of 14...exf4 in mind.' (Petrosian)

12 ♘d2 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 f4 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘e5 16 ♖ae1 ♗d7

Thus, we see before us the results of prophylaxis. After freeing himself from the pin, Black has nevertheless carried out the thematic ...f7-f5, but chronic weaknesses have appeared in his position. However, it appears that the activity of his pieces should enable him to equalise.



The knight at e5 is a fine piece, and the one at c5 also stands well, whereas for the moment Black's weaknesses (the f5-pawn and the e6- and g6-squares) are not felt. And again we encounter an example, typical of our previous theme: the correlation between long-term factors and the concrete dynamics of the position. It is useful and interesting to observe how skilfully and accurately the young Petrosian (who was then still only 25) begins to extinguish dynamics and change the evaluation of the position in his favour.

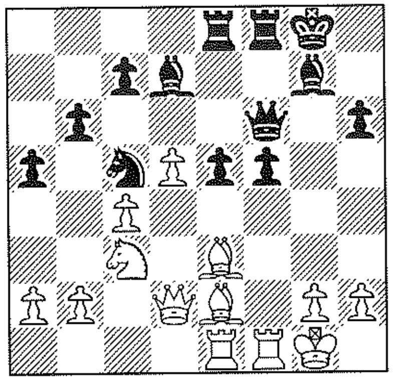
17 ♘f3! (first the e5-knight is eliminated) **17...♕f6**

'Another small "but" is revealed. If the pawn had been at h7, 17...♘g6 would have been a good move. But now after 18 ♗e3 Black does not have the attractive advance of the f-pawn on account of the loss of a piece.' (Petrosian)

18 ♕d2 ♖ae8 19 ♘xe5!

Unexpectedly changing the pattern of the position. It would seem to be a pity to take on e5: now the white knight cannot go to d4, from where it would have attacked the f5-pawn and threatened to invade at e6. But in fact the e5-knight was so strong, that White cannot get by without eliminating it. With such a knight still on the board, the aforementioned weaknesses would simply be mythical, since the black pieces are too well developed.

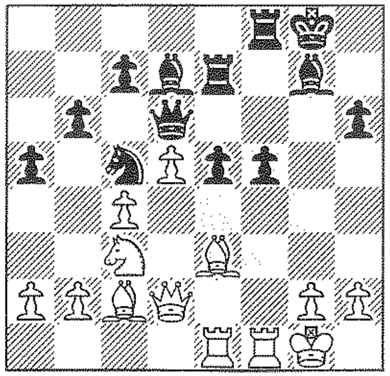
19...dxe5 20 ♗e3 b6



Instead of a weak, isolated f5-pawn, there are now hanging e- and f-pawns. What are they – a strength or a weakness? And again Petrosian made an extremely subtle evaluation of the correlation between temporary dynamics and long-term weaknesses. Of course, the pawns look very fine, but they only seem to be so. It only needs one of them to advance, and obvious holes immediately appear: ...e5-e4 weakens the f4- and d4-squares and facilitates the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, while ...f5-f4 is even worse, since after ♗xc5 the white knight occupies the e4-square. Therefore Black is forced to defend passively, hoping that it will be hard for White to find a plan to strengthen his position.

21 ♗h5 (as Petrosian pointed out, the immediate 21 ♗d1 was more accurate, but this is a minor point) **21...♖e7 22 ♗d1! ♕d6 23 ♗c2**

Pressing little-by-little on the hanging pawns.

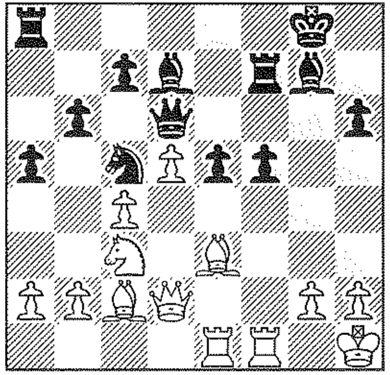


23...♖ef7

It is very important that 23...e4 does not achieve anything, since the d3-square is under control: 24 ♗f4 ♗e5 25 ♘e2, then ♕e3, and Black's weaknesses are very obvious. Therefore Suetin waits. As does Petrosian – such things never embarrassed him.

24 ♔h1 ♖a8

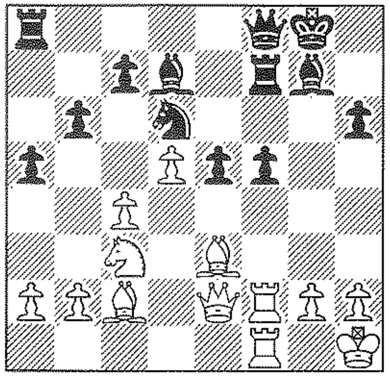
After 24...♖f6 25 ♕e2! with the threat of a2-a3 and b2-b4 (not immediately 25 a3 in view of 25...a4 26 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 27 ♕e2 ♖a8 28 ♕xe5 ♕xc4) the mobility of the e- and f-pawns is still mythical. And so Black makes the apparently strange move 24...♖a8, 'considering himself obliged to forestall a2-a3 and b2-b4: if 25 a3 there follows 25...a4.' (Petrosian)



25 ♖e2! (exploiting the deflection of the rook to a8, White intensifies the pressure on the f5-pawn) **25...♕f8 26 ♖ef2** (with the threat of ♕e2-h5) **26...♘b7**

Again both 26...e4 and 26...f4 are bad, and White's first achievement is seen: the knight is forced 'voluntarily', without the help of b2-b4, to abandon the c5-square and switch to d6, in order to defend the f5-pawn.

27 ♕e2 ♘d6



28 c5! bxc5 29 ♗xc5

But now White has broken up the opponent's pawn chain on the queenside, and the number of weaknesses in the enemy position begins to exceed the acceptable norm. However, the position is still far from simple: Black has some defensive resources and slight play with his pieces.

29...♖b8 30 b3 ♕c8

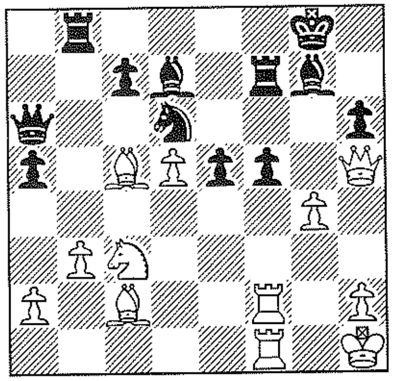
Petrosian condemned this 'inexplicable manoeuvre, removing the queen from the main part of the battlefield,' and recommended 30...e4 (31 ♘xe4? ♗b5). However, after this White would again have had the unpleasant 31 ♕e3 ♗f6 32 ♘e2 ♕g7 33 ♘f4 with a clear advantage (here the weakness of the e6-square also tells). Even after 30...♕c8 I would not evaluate Black's position as lost. It is extremely difficult, of course, but it is still possible to resist.

31 ♕h5 ♕a6?!

'Having lost the strategic battle, Black tries to save the f5-pawn tactically: 32 ♗xd6 cxd6 33 ♗xf5? ♗xf5 34 ♖xf5 ♕xf1+.' (Petrosian)

32 g4!

At the appropriate moment! Petrosian's caution was legendary, but when the time came to make sharp, committing moves, he did not avoid them. That is, he always played by the position. Judge for yourself: the queen at a6 and rook at b8 have clearly forgotten about their king.



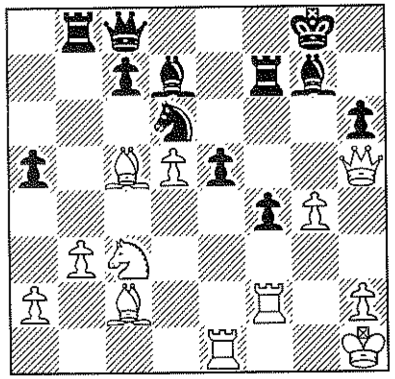
32...f4

'Forced, but now Black's seemingly powerful pawns are easily blockaded.' (Petrosian) I think that if 32...e4 Tigran Vartanovich would have played 33 gxf5! ♗xc3 34 f6 with crushing threats. But after 32...f4 the bishop at c2 joins the attack and ♕g6 is a constant threat.

33 ♖e1

A highly competent move. The e4-square has been chronically weakened and there is no need to hurry with 33 ♕g6?!: after 33...♖f6 34 ♕h7+ ♔f7 35 ♗d3 ♕b7 36 ♗e2 ♗f5! 37 gxf5 ♖h8 the evaluation of the position could have changed in Black's favour.

33...♕c8



34 ♗xd6?

Petrosian attaches an exclamation mark to this move and explains: 'The start of a forcing manoeuvre leading to the collapse of the black position. In the opponent's time-trouble White quickly won.' The conclusion of the game is not annotated, but it is here that some very interesting (and very typical!) events begin. It is a pity that many games of the great masters from the past remain not fully annotated, as otherwise we would have the good fortune to see many amusing adventures.

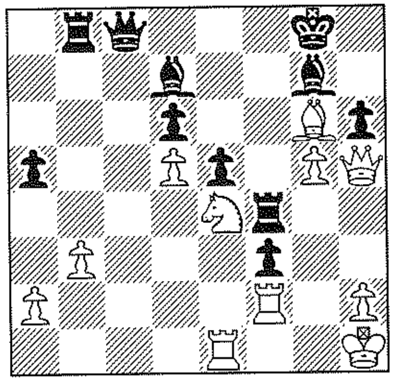
There is no doubt that White has a strategically won position, and all its advantages would have been retained by the quiet 34 h3 or the more resolute 34 ♖g1! followed by g4-g5. On the other hand, the exchange on d6 is hasty, immediately allowing Black to create some counterplay.

34...cxd6 35 ♗g6 ♖f8 36 ♘e4 f3?

A blunder. It is not clear why Suetin did not play 36...♗xg4. After 37 ♕h4 White has good compensation for the pawn, of course, but the outcome would still have been totally unclear.

37 g5 ♖f4

37...♗g4 did not work on account of 38 ♕h4 ♖f4 39 gxh6.



38 ♖g1??

A blunder in reply, which could have changed the result of the game, depriving White of a deserved win! 38 gxh6 ♗g4 39 ♕g5 would have won easily.

38...♗f5??

Here it is, time-trouble! After 38...♗g4! Petrosian would have faced a difficult test: 39 ♗f7+ ♔h8 40 gxh6 (40 ♕g6?! ♗f5 41 ♕xd6 ♗xe4 42 gxh6 ♗f6) 40...♗xh5 41 hxg7+ ♔h7 42 g8♕+ ♕xg8 43 ♗xg8+ ♖xg8 44 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 45 ♘xd6 ♖d4, or 39 ♕h4 ♗h3 40 ♕h5 (40 ♕g3?! ♖g4 41 ♕xf3 ♖xg1+ 42 ♔xg1 ♕c1+) 40...♗g2+ 41 ♖gxg2 fxg2+ 42 ♔xg2 ♖xf2+ 43 ♘xf2 ♕c1, and in both cases it is not clear whether White could have saved the game. It is surprising that these events were not reflected at all in commentaries on the game.

39 gxh6 (now everything is in place)

39...♗xe4 40 ♗xe4 1-0

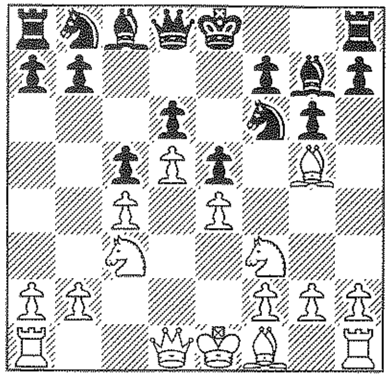
Despite the mutual time-trouble mistakes, this is a very instructive game. It signifies the triumph for the basic idea of the Petrosian Variation – deep prophylaxis, based on the effect of long-term factors of the position against temporary, petering out dynamics.

The following 'Indian' game is also instructive, although it too does not demonstrate the idea of the variation in pure form, since Black immediately went in for the blocking of the centre, by playing ...c7-c5 and ...e7-e5. Nowadays we know that this restricts Black's active possibilities, but at that time many thought that it was also possible to play this way and that Black, with his little centre (c5-d6-e5 against c4-d5-e4), has counterplay in the form of ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5. At the amateur level this would be all very well, but grandmasters of Petrosian's class learned how to exploit the advantage in space. Also with the help of prophylaxis.

Game 7
T.Petrosian-H.Pilnik
Candidates Tournament,
Amsterdam 1956, 6th round
Benoni Defence A56

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 ♘c3 d6 5 e4 g6 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 ♗g5

Even so! Here this is even better, because Black will no longer have a knight at c5.



7...♘a6

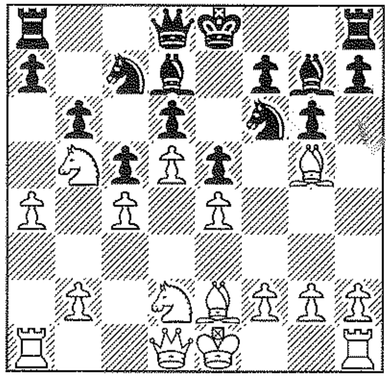
'7...h6 was more subtle. At such an early stage White would hardly have given up his dark-squared bishop. The bishop at g5 considerably hinders Black's ...f7-f5.' (Petrosian)

8 ♗e2 ♘c7 9 ♘d2 ♗d7 (9...a6!? 10 a4 b6)

10 a4 b6

Pilnik does indeed play the opening without any particular subtlety, as if saying that for the present Black has a solid position, and let's see what happens. He was intending to go ...a7-a6, ...♖b8 and ...b6-b5 (if immediately 10...a6, then 11 a5!), but here he was suddenly taken aback by a non-routine move.

11 ♘b5!

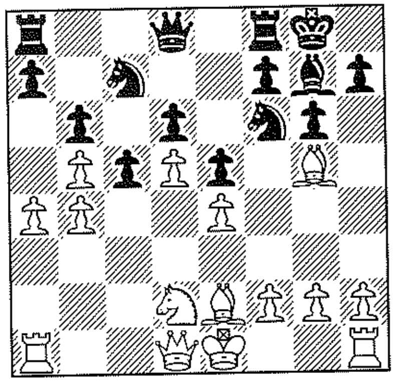


11...♗xb5?

Black faces a difficult dilemma. In the event of 11...♘xb5!? 12 axb5 he has an unattractive position, and so Pilnik preferred 11...♗xb5, obviously expecting 12 axb5 with an unclear game after the possible 12...0-0 13 0-0 a5 14 bxa6 ♘xa6 15 ♕b3 ♘b4 – it is quite hard to break this fortress. But an extremely unpleasant surprise awaits him.

12 cxb5! (vacating the c4-square; today such an idea has become typical, but then it was a genuine revelation) **12...0-0 13 b4!**

Very strong! It transpires that Black has great problems.



'The capture on b4 opens the c-file, on which White has an outpost at c6. Black will not even be able to oppose rooks, since the c8-square can be controlled by the white bishop. On the other hand, bxc5 is also rather unpleasant for Black. After ...bxc5(?) White easily creates a passed pawn on the queenside, while after ...dxc5 he places his knight at c4 and combines the threat of a4-a5 with the advance of his passed d5-pawn.' (Petrosian)

In short, White already has a strategically won position. But the win for him still demands considerable effort – I should remind you that the game was played in a Candidates tournament for the world championship!

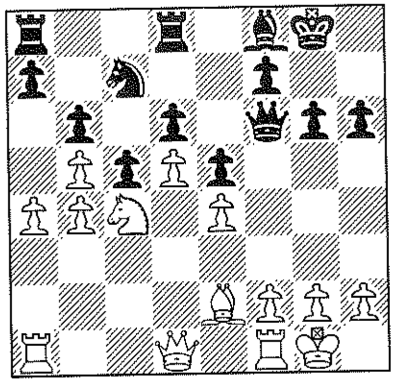
13...h6 14 ♗xf6!

A concrete approach! 'Weaker was 14 ♗e3 ♘d7 followed by 15...cxb4 and ...♘c5.' (Petrosian) Also after 14 ♗h4 in the future the black knight would have been able to go to d7 and, after ...cxb4, to c5, blocking the c-file. That is, Petrosian subtly sensed that in the given instance the knight at f6 was far more important than his bishop and it had to be eliminated. Now Black will be unable to block the c-file, since the knight at c7 is a very long way from the c5-square.

In view of this, perhaps Black should first have played 13...♘ce8!? (instead of 13...h6), to try and somehow approach c5 with his knight. However, this too looks rather unimpressive.

14...♕xf6 15 0-0 ♖fd8 16 ♘c4 ♗f8

It is quite conceivable that Pilnik considered his defences to be sufficiently solid.



17 g3

'White can strengthen his position unhindered, and so Black, after defending his d6-pawn, takes on b4.' (Petrosian)

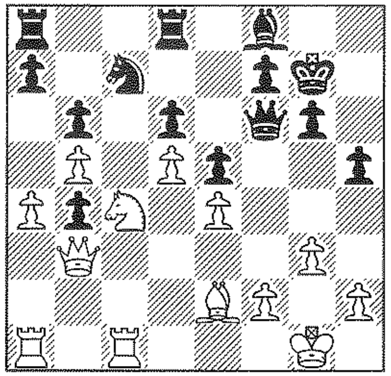
17...cxb4

This is understandable: otherwise sooner or later (say, after ♔g2, h2-h4 and ♕b3) White would have taken on c5, and then – as in the note to 13 b4! I think that Pilnik decided on ...cxb4 in the hope that for the moment the weakness of the c6-square would not be fatal and Black would be able to gain counterplay on the kingside.

18 ♕b3 ♔g7 19 ♖fc1

Also good is 19 ♘e3 (if 19 ♕xb4?!, then 19...♘e6! 20 dxe6 d5!) 19...h5 20 ♘c2 followed by ♘xb4-c6, but Petrosian carries out his plan, thinking that it is a rook that will be best placed on c6. In the given instance this is a matter of taste.

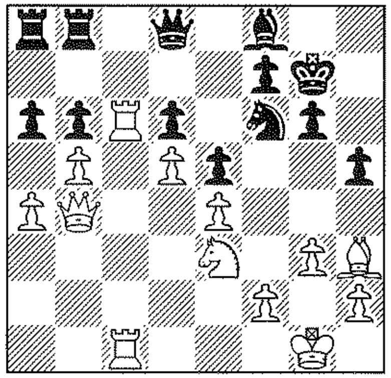
19...h5



20 ♘e3 ♘e8 21 ♕xb4 ♖dc8 22 ♖c6 ♕d8 (22...♖xc6?! 23 bxc6 with the threat of ♗a6-b7 and a4-a5) **23 ♖ac1 ♘f6**

Pilnik also carries out a definite plan. He has defended his d6- and b6-pawns (in the event of him playing ...a7-a6), placed his knight at f6 and is threatening ...♘d7-c5, after which it will be not at all easy for White to breach his opponent's defences. Petrosian prevents this.

24 ♗f1! ♖cb8 (avoiding 24...♘d7? 25 ♗h3 ♖cb8 26 ♗xd7! or 25...♖xc6 26 dxc6 ♘c5 27 ♘d5 and c6-c7) **25 ♗h3 a6!**



What should White do next? Although all his pieces are finely placed, for the moment Black's weaknesses are defended. Without the move ♘c4, putting pressure on the pawns and completely restricting Black's forces, he cannot get by, but what to do with the e4-pawn?

26 ♖e1!!

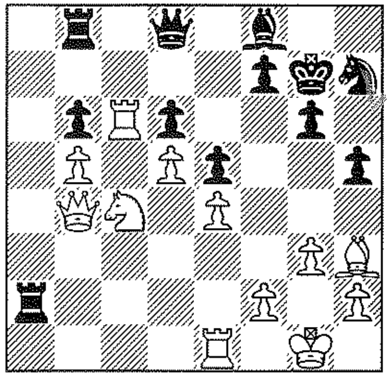
A unique move – another triumph for the idea of prophylaxis! White defends his pawn in advance, through the knight. 'The obvious 26 f3? has the significant drawback of weakening the dark squares and the second rank – after 26...axb5 27 axb5 h4 Black gains serious counterplay. On the h3-c8 diagonal the bishop occupies too strong a position for it to be switched to the modest role of guarding the e4-pawn.' (Petrosian) Of course, the rook at e1 is also modestly placed, but there is nothing else to be done. Fantastic logic! This move might simply not be noticed, but when it is made you understand just how strong it is.

Incidentally, the computer finds it very difficult here: it insists on 26 f3, while 26 ♖e1, from its 'point of view' reduces White's advantage. It is beyond its powers to remove a rook from an open file!

26...axb5 27 axb5 ♘h7?!

Black should have 'marked time', but Pilnik flinched (a human always aims for the initiative), decided to bring out his queen to f6 and as a result lost his b6-pawn. In my view, more tenacious was 27...h4 28 ♘c4 hxg3 29 hxg3 ♔g8 30 ♕b3 ♖a7 31 ♕e3 ♘e8, although even here the b6-pawn will most probably be lost. Black's position is of course extremely unpleasant, but to breach it immediately is not so simple.

28 ♘c4 ♖a2

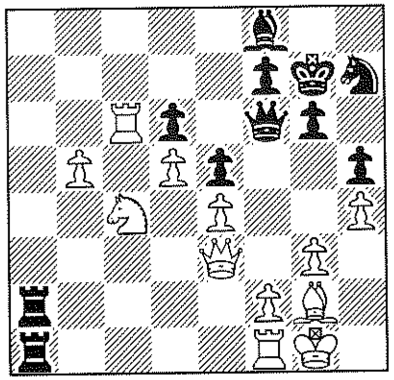


29 ♗g2! (now ...♘d7 is no longer threatened, and the bishop can guard the e4-

pawn, in order to free the rook at e1 for the defence of the f2-pawn) **29...♕f6 30 ♖f1 ♘g5 31 ♕b3 ♖ba8 32 h4**

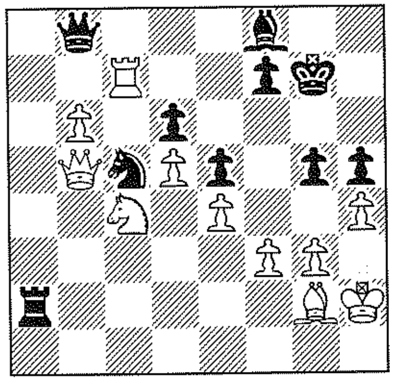
The knight is driven back, and at this Black's attack comes to an end (however, it never in fact began).

32...♘h7 33 ♖xb6 ♖a1 34 ♖c6 ♖8a2 35 ♕e3



Parrying the threat of ...♕xf2+. The conversion of the extra pawn does not present any great difficulty for Petrosian. As he liked to joke, 'you have a pawn – brains are not needed!'

35...♕d8 36 ♖xa1 (36 b6! Petrosian) **36...♖xa1+ 37 ♔h2 ♘f6 38 f3** (here the weakening of the dark squares can no longer be exploited: 38 ♗h3!?) **38...♕b8 39 ♕b3 ♘d7 40 b6 ♘c5 41 ♕b2 ♖a4 42 ♕b5 ♖a2 43 ♖c7** (threatening ♘a5-c6 and b6-b7) **43...g5**



Pilnik again flinches, and things end in a light-squared triumph for the f5-knight over the bad f8-bishop.

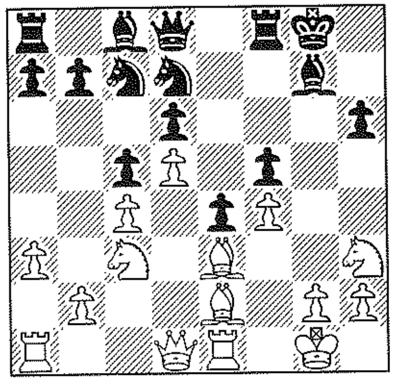
44 ♘e3! gxh4 45 ♘f5+ ♔g8 46 gxh4 ♖a6 47 b7 ♖a7 48 ♖c8 ♕xb7 49 ♕e8 ♘d7 50 ♘xd6 1-0

Incidentally, when looking through the tournament book of that Candidates tournament, I remembered another innovatory idea of the 9th world champion.

Game 8

D.Bronstein-T.Petrosian

Candidates Tournament,
Amsterdam 1956, 11th round



17...♗xc3!

A bold exchange of the 'King's Indian' bishop. This is also a kind of prophylaxis! 'This interesting strategic idea is a striking example of a concrete penetration into the position. Black eliminates the knight which could have played an active role in implementing the g2-g4 breakthrough and, particularly important, White's dark-squared bishop is denied the opportunity of occupying the weakened a1-h8 diagonal.' (Aronin)

18 bxc3 ♘f6 19 a4 ♔h8 20 ♘f2 ♖g8 21 ♔h1 ♕e8 22 ♖g1 ♕g6 23 ♕d2 ♗d7 24 g3 ♖ae8 25 a5 ♖e7 26 ♖ab1 ♗c8 27 ♖g2 ♖eg7 28 ♖bg1 ♘ce8 29 h3 h5! ½-½

Nipping g3-g4 in the bud. Draw agreed, although Black's position is even slightly the more pleasant.

Several important games for the Petrosian Variation were played in the 26th USSR Championship (Tbilisi 1959), where Tigran Vartanovich, again going through the entire event undefeated, won the first of his four gold medals. Moreover, he finished a point ahead of Tal, who was already twice champion of the country, not long before had won the Interzonal tournament, and was soon also to win the Candidates tournament (in each of these last two events Petrosian finished third).

Game 9

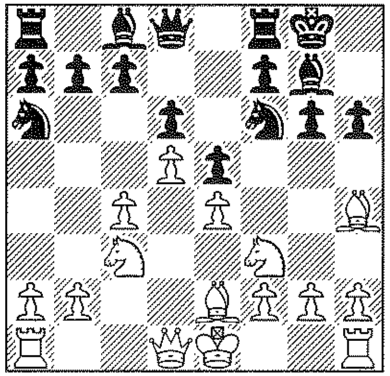
T.Petrosian-Ya.Yukhtman

26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959
King's Indian Defence E92

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5 ♘a6

The alternative is 7...♘bd7 (*Game No.6*) or 7...a5 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘a6 10 0-0 ♕e8 11 ♘d2 ♘h7 (11...♗d7 – *Game No.67*) 12 a3 h5 13 f3 ♗h6? (13...♗d7! 14 b3 ♗h6 is correct) 14 b4! ♗d7 15 ♖b1 with the initiative (Petrosian-Kottnauer, Lugano Olympiad 1968).

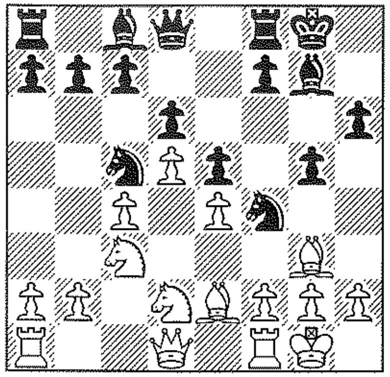
8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4



9...g5

An aggressive plan with the manoeuvre of the knight to f4. The Petrosian-Lutikov game from the same event went 9...c5 10 ♘d2 ♗d7?! (10...♘c7 was more accurate) 11 ♘b5! ♗e8 (we have already seen 11...♗xb5? 12 cxb5) 12 a3 ♕d7 (12...♘c7 13 ♘c3! a6 14 b4!) 13 g4 ♘c7 (13...♘h7!?) 14 ♘c3 a6 15 a4 ♕c8 16 h3! ♖b8 17 ♕c2 ♗d7 18 b3 b6 19 ♘d1 b5 20 a5! (a typical idea, restricting the knight at c7) 20...♔h8 (20...bxc4 21 bxc4 ♖b4 22 ♘b2! ♕a8 23 ♘d3 with the idea of ♗g3 and f2-f4) 21 ♗g3 ♘g8 22 ♘e3 ♘e7 (22...bxc4 23 bxc4 ♖b4 24 ♕c3 and ♘c2) 23 ♗h4! (23 b4?! f5! 24 bxc5 f4! is unclear) 23...♕e8?! (23...♘g8 was better) 24 b4! ♘c8 (24...bxc4 25 bxc5! or 24...cxb4? 25 c5!) 25 bxc5 dxc5 26 cxb5 and White won on the 42nd move.

10 ♗g3 ♘h5 11 ♘d2 ♘f4 12 0-0 ♘c5

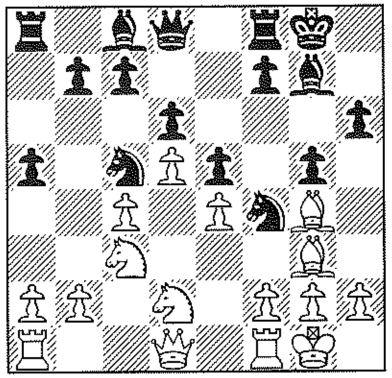


The knights are quite nicely placed, and later games showed that Black does not have a bad position. But accurate and energetic play is required of him: the light squares are already weakened, and it may happen that his activity comes to an end but the hole at f5 remains. In addition, White can gradually prepare an offensive on the queenside.

13 ♗g4 (exchanging the main defender of the f5-square) **13...a5?!**

A second-rate move. It would appear that Yukhtman did not quite understand what White wanted: the knight at f4 seems to be paralysing his entire game, the hole at d3 is already yawning and it is still a very long way to f5. In later games Black employed the gambit continuation 13...♗xg4!? 14 ♕xg4 h5 15 ♕f5 h4 16 ♗xf4 exf4 17 ♘f3 ♕f6! 18 ♘xg5 ♕xf5 19 exf5 ♗xc3!? (or 19...♖fe8 20 ♘b5 ♖e7 21 ♖ae1 ♖ae8 22 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 23 b4 ♘d3 24 ♘xa7 ♘xb4 25 ♖b1 ♘d3 26 ♘b5 with a slight advantage) 20 bxc3 ♖fe8 21 ♖fe1 ♔g7 22 ♘f3 h3 with an unclear position – by breaking up the white pawns, Black has gained real counterplay.

Now it is interesting to observe how methodically, although not without the help of his opponent, Petrosian exploits the weakness of the f5-square.



14 f3!

'The bishop will move from g3, making way for the pawn. Black's knight cannot be maintained at f4, and without it he cannot hope for any activity. By contrast, White's plan is simple: he must try to play a knight to e3, when it will be close to the f5-square.' (Petrosian)

14...♘cd3 15 ♕c2 c6

This is what Yukhtman was hoping for – counterplay on the c-file. However, it proves to be not quite sufficient.

16 ♔h1! h5 17 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 18 a3!

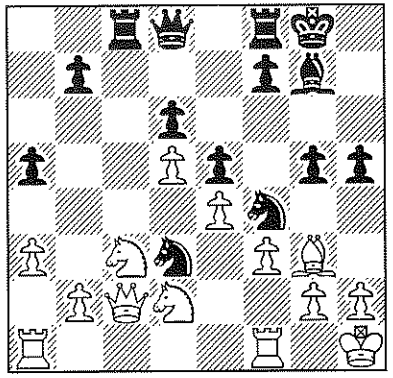
A very important and instructive move. It appears that here it is not needed: all the same, b2-b4 cannot be played. However, White's aim was a different one: to create the threat of ♗xf4 and g2-g3. After the immediate 18 ♗xf4 there is the important interposition 18...♘b4!, for example: 19 ♕b3 exf4 with good counterplay (20 a3 ♘a6 21 ♕xb7? ♘c5 22 ♕a7 ♖a8), or 19 ♗xg5 ♘xc2 20 ♗xd8 ♘xa1 21 ♗e7 ♖fe8 22 ♗xd6 ♘c2 with compensation for the exchange and chances for both sides.

18...cxd5

After 18...h4 19 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 20 g3 ♘h5 21 ♔g2 ♕d7 22 ♕d3 Black constantly has to think about the weakness of his f5, while if he plays 22...f5?!, then after 23 exf5 ♖xf5 24 ♘de4 the knight establishes itself at e4 and the weakness of the light squares becomes transparent.

19 cxd5

If 19 ♘xd5 then it is essential to play 19...h4! (19...b5!? 20 ♖ab1!) 20 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 21 ♕b3 ♘xd5 22 cxd5 ♕c7 or 21 ♘xf4 exf4 22 ♖ad1 ♖e8 with chances of equality.



19...♘c5?

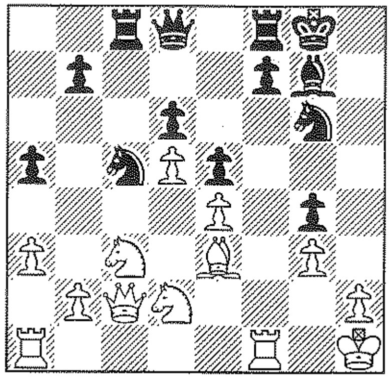
Capitulation! Since Yukhtman has opened the c-file, it makes sense to use this somehow. After the sharp 19...b5 20 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 21 ♕b3 ♖b8 22 ♘d1! (22 ♘xb5 a4! 23 ♕xa4 ♕b6) 22...♘e2 23 ♘e3 ♘d4 24 ♕d3 White would have retained the advantage, planning 25 ♘f5 ♘xf5 26 exf5 and ♘e4 (weakness of the light squares!). But after 19...♕b6! it would have been hard for him to find anything stronger than the modest 20 ♗xf4 (20 ♖ab1 h4) 20...♘xf4 21 g3 (21 ♖ac1 ♕d4!?) 21...♘e2 22 ♕d3 ♘d4 23 ♖ab1.

20 ♗f2 (with the threat of g2-g3; now things become very difficult for Black) **20...g4?!**

Desperation. Such extraordinary measures are usually unsuccessful and merely aggravate the situation, by increasing the number of weaknesses. Black's activity quickly evaporates.

21 g3 ♘g6 (even so, it was preferable to play 21...♘fd3!? 22 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 23 fxg4 hxg4 24 ♘c4! etc.) **22 fxg4 hxg4 23 ♗e3**

To some extent Black's pawn structure resembles a sieve.



23...b5? (a last-gasp try: White simply takes the pawn) **24 ♘xb5 ♕b6 25 a4! ♕a6 26 ♘c4** (the game is decided, and Yukhtman's desperate thrust does not change anything) **26...f5 27 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 28 exf5 ♕b7 29 ♕g2 ♘b3 30 ♘cxd6 ♕d7 31 ♖f1 1-0**

Yukhtman's play was unconvincing, of course: for all his tactical talent, he was rather weak in positional evaluation, although, like every finalist in the USSR Championships of that time, he had not at all a bad understanding of chess subtleties. This makes even more impressive the difference in class between the strong Soviet masters and grandmaster Petrosian, who had not yet even achieved the height of his powers.

'Petrosian's style,' wrote world champion Botvinnik after this tournament, 'to some extent resembles the style of Capablanca, Flohr and perhaps Smyslov. Players of this type make use of their main strength – superiority in positional understanding; therefore they aim to obtain positions where the time factor and the tactical element are not of decisive importance, where they can formulate solidly-based plans, leading with iron consistency to victory. Of course, if Petrosian were only an expert in the field of positional play and were not in addition a clever tactician, he would not have been able to gain such a convincing victory in Tbilisi!'

In Averbakh's opinion, such a description hardly conveys the distinctiveness of Petrosian's style and this lack of understanding of his play also told in the Botvinnik-Petrosian match. Tigran Vartanovich himself said: 'It is asserted that my favourite player is Capablanca. They have even pinned a label on me: "follower of the Capablanca style". In fact, for me there cannot exist any one idol in principle. Thus if I were to name a few names, I would give Nimzowitsch, Capablanca and Rubinstein.' He knew from childhood the games of the first two, while he became acquainted with the secrets of Rubinstein's play in the late 1950s – and he came to the conclusion that 'no one previously had such a deep positional style.'

But what Petrosian definitely had in common with Capablanca was his extraordinary speed of thought. He, like the legendary Cuban, was one of the best blitz players in the world (along with Bronstein, Tal, Korchnoi, Fischer and, later, Karpov). When in the summer of 1958 the 15-year-old Bobby Fischer arrived in Moscow, Petrosian, as he put it, 'was summoned to the Central Chess Club, to deal with a youth who had defeated the Moscow masters in blitz play.' Tigran Vartanovich was a four-times winner of the popular blitz tournaments for the prize of the *Vechernyaya Moskva* newspaper, and in March 1971 he won the All-Union grandmaster blitz tournament, scoring 14½ out of 15(!!).

The Saga of Svetozar

Once we have begun talking about the King's Indian Defence, it is impossible not to mention a prominent expert on it, the outstanding Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric (born 1923), who was among the contenders for the world championship in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Second World War wiped out four years from the chess biography of the talented master, during two of which he fought against the Nazis as a member of Marshall Tito's partisan army. After the victory Svetozar returned to his favourite game, not only competing at the board and avidly reading chess literature, but also founding a chess club in Belgrade and organising a championship of the capital, and then also of the country. He quickly became the No.1 player in Yugoslavia, one of the most chess-avid countries in the world, where there was an abundance of top-class players throughout the 20th century: in place of Vidmar and Kostic came Pirc and Trifunovic, then Gligoric, Rabar, Matanovic, Fuderer, Ivkov, Matulovic, Parma, Planinc, Ljubojevic...

Gligoric became internationally known after his sensational triumph in Warsaw (1947): 1. Gligoric – 8 out of 9; 2-5. Boleslavsky, Smyslov... – 6 etc. He was immediately considered a dangerous rival to the Soviet grandmasters, and for a time the USSR sports authorities were watchful about sending them to tournaments where the young and ambitious Yugoslav was playing. Although, at that time he was not even a grandmaster: he was awarded this title only in 1951.

In the absence of the USSR, the Yugoslav team, led by Gligoric, confidently won the first post-war Olympiad (Dubrovnik 1950). This success and medal places at many of the subsequent Olympiads were a vivid indication of the extraordinary popularity of chess in the country. Indeed, in the second half of the 20th century Yugoslavia became a genuine chess Mecca: where else did so many international tournaments take place?! And, of course, it was no accident that it was here that the revolutionary idea of creating a kind of bible for qualified players was born – the periodical *Informator* and the five-volume *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings*, arranged in accordance with the famous Rabar Index: A-B-C-D-E.

I made my first acquaintance with Gligoric's play back in my youth, when I read Bronstein's legendary book on the Candidates tournament in Zurich (1953). Especially engraved in my memory is the following fascinating game – a highly complicated example on the theme of blockade: in order to deprive the enemy pieces of mobility, Black had to sacrifice two pawns. This proved a high price and the outcome of the battle was unclear to the very end.

Game 10

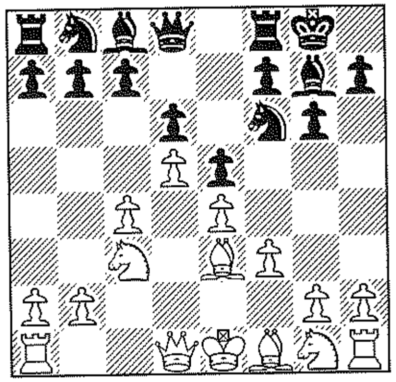
A.Kotov-S.Gligoric

Candidates Tournament,
Zurich 1953, 25th round
King's Indian Defence E87

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6

'The numerous spectacular wins by Boleslavsky, Bronstein and Geller induced me also to make my opening repertoire sharper. After including in it the King's Indian Defence, my results with Black improved significantly. At the Interzonal tournament in Saltsjöbaden (1952) I employed it against Geller himself – and won! And then for many long years I was faithful to this opening.' (Gligoric)

5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 d5



7...c5

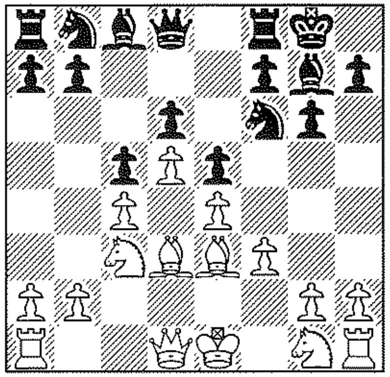
As it soon transpires, this move is premature. Black avoids 7...♘h5 8 ♕d2 f5 9 0-0-0 f4?! 10 ♗f2 ♗f6 11 ♘ge2 ♗h4 12 ♗g1! (Geller-Gligoric, 11th round). The attempt to combine both plans – 9...a6 10 ♗d3 c5!? (if 10...♘d7 Geller suggested 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♘ge2) is parried by 11 dxc6! ♘xc6 12 ♘d5 ♗e6 13 ♗b6 ♕d7 14 ♘e2 ♖ac8 15 ♔b1 ♕f7 16 ♖he1 with some pressure (Karpov-Kasparov, 21st matchgame, Lyon 1990).

Therefore 7...c6! is more active, for example: 8 ♕d2 cxd5 9 cxd5 ♘bd7 10 ♘ge2 a6 11 ♘c1?! (11 g4 – *Game No.85*) 11...♘h5 12 ♗d3 f5 13 ♘1e2 ♘df6 14 exf5 gxf5 15 ♘g3 e4! (following Gligoric!) 16 ♘xh5 ♘xh5 17 fxe4 f4! 18 ♗f2 ♗g4 19 h3 ♗d7 20 0-0-0 ♗e5! 21 ♔b1 ♕f6 22 ♗e2 ♘g3 23 ♗xg3?! fxg3 24 ♗f3 ♖ac8... 0-1 (Gheorghiu-Kasparov, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988).

8 ♗d3

Two rounds later in the game Kotov-Najdorf an improvement was unveiled – 8 g4! (depriving the knight of the h5-square) 8...♘e8 9 h4 f5 10 exf5 gxf5, but later Tal suggested 10 gxf5! gxf5 11 exf5 ♗xf5 12 ♗d3!, when thanks to his control of e4 White has the advantage. It is important that the following does not work: 12...e4 13 fxe4 ♕e7?! (13...♗c8 14 e5!?) 14 exf5 ♕xe3+ 15 ♕e2 ♕g3+ 16 ♔d2 and wins (Tal-Boleslavsky, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958).

But after, say, 8 ♕d2 ♘e8 9 ♗d3 f5 10 exf5 gxf5 11 0-0-0 the ...e5-e4 breakthrough may prove highly effective: 11...a6 12 ♘ge2 b5 13 ♖dg1 ♘d7 14 cxb5 e4! 15 fxe4 fxe4 16 ♘xe4 axb5 17 ♗xb5 ♖xa2 with excellent counterplay for the pawn (Korchnoi-Boleslavsky, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957).

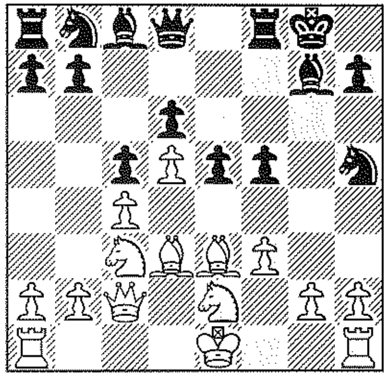


8...♘h5 9 ♘ge2 f5 10 exf5 gxf5

A tense position, typical of the Sämisch Attack. White is not in a hurry to determine the placing of his king and now he has to take a very important decision – choose a square for his queen.

11 ♕c2

It is also logical to play 11 ♕d2 (with control of the f4- and g5-squares), when Black can reply 11...♘d7 12 ♗g5 ♕e8 with the idea of 13 ♘b5 e4! 14 fxe4 ♘e5 15 0-0 ♘xd3 16 ♕xd3 fxe4 17 ♕e3 ♕g6 18 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 19 ♖f1 ♗d7 (Pachman-Ivkov, Sarajevo 1964), or else frighten White with the threat of a diversion on the queenside – 11...a6 12 a4 (12 0-0-0 b5!) 12...♘d7 13 ♗g5 ♕e8 14 0-0 ♘df6 15 ♗c2 ♗d7 (Hort-Gligoric, Niksic 1978), while in the event of 12 ♘g3 ♕e8! 13 ♘xh5 ♕xh5 14 0-0-0 (14 0-0 ♘d7 15 f4 ♖b8 16 a4 is rather more solid) he can carry out the same blockading idea as in the game: 14...e4! 15 fxe4 f4! 16 ♗f2 ♘d7 and now 17 g3 f3 18 g4 ♕e8 19 g5 ♘e5 with compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

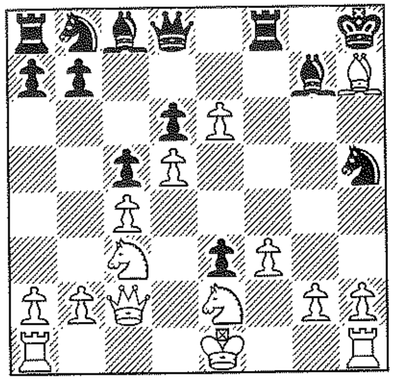


11...e4! (a positional sacrifice for the sake of activating the g7-bishop and occupying the e5-square, whereas White's pawn on e4 will restrict his forces) **12 fxe4 f4! 13 ♗f2**

A modern grandmaster, armed with the experience of his predecessors and fearing a blockade, might go in for such an extreme measure as a piece sacrifice – 13 e5!, since after 13...♗xe5 14 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 ♗f2 White has an obvious advantage (Knaak-Velimirovic, Sombor 1972).

13...fxe3! is stronger, although after 14

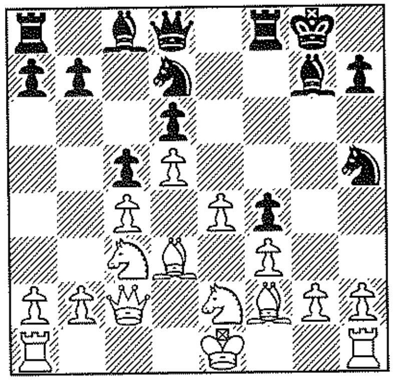
♗xh7+ ♔h8 15 e6 Black is in danger: he has an entire flank shut out of the game.



Analysis diagram

He has to choose between 15...♘f4, 15...♖f2 and two conter-sacrifices – 15...♕h4+ 16 g3 ♘xg3 17 ♘xg3 ♕xh7 or 15...♘c6 16 dxc6 bxc6 with a double-edged game.

13...♘d7!



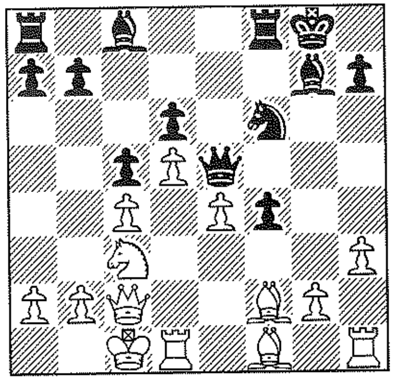
14 ♘g1

With the intention of exchanging the knight at e5, although this does not solve the problem of activating the ♕c2 and ♗d3 battery. Alas, 14 e5 is too late on account of 14...♘xe5! 15 ♗xh7+ ♔h8. Bronstein evaluates this position as hopeless for White. I think that he is being too categorical, but after 16 0-0-0 ♕g5 17 ♔b1 ♕xg2 18 ♘e4 ♘f6 19 ♖hg1 ♕f3 20 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 21 ♘c3 ♕h5 22 ♗e4 ♗g4 Black's chances are indeed clearly better – largely thanks to his powerful knight at e5.

14...♕g5 15 ♗f1 ♘e5!

'Black has won the first battle, by pushing back the opponent's forces, but he has not yet won the entire campaign. After regrouping, the white pieces come out again to more active positions.' (Bronstein)

16 ♘f3 ♕e7 17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 0-0-0 ♘f6 19 h3



19...♗d7

'Gligoric likes well-prepared breakthroughs. A more impatient player would have been unable to refrain from 19...a6 20 ♗d3 b5 21 cxb5 axb5 22 ♗xb5 ♗a6 with an attack along the a- and b-files and along the long diagonal.' (Bronstein) It is more solid to play 20 a4! ♗d7 21 ♖de1, although, of course, after 21...♘h5 Black has compensation for the pawn.

But an altogether impatient player would have been unable to restrain himself from playing 19...b5!? 20 cxb5 a6!, forcing events: 21 a4 axb5 22 ♗xb5 ♗d7 23 ♖he1 ♗xb5 24 ♘xb5 ♘h5 with unclear complications.

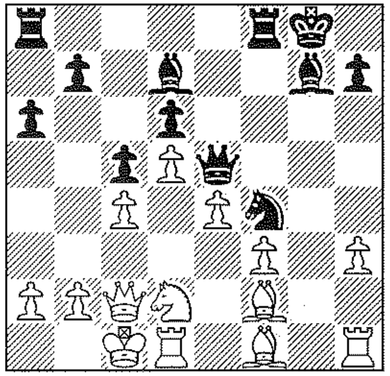
20 ♗d3 a6 21 ♘b1! (with the idea of 21...b5?! 22 ♘d2!) **21...f3!?**

'Fine play. White's planned manoeuvre ♘d2-f3 could have led to the ruin of Black's entire blockading strategy. Gligoric shows himself to be a genuine chess artist, by giving up a second pawn in order to deprive the knight of the f3-square and expand the sphere of the blockade,' writes Bronstein and he awards two exclamation marks to the move in the game.

In my opinion, this is going too far. Gligoric's spectacular idea obliges him to play with extreme accuracy (he is after all two pawns down!), and meanwhile the implementation of the ♘d2-f3 threat was not so simple and the position allowed Black to make do with therapeutic measures: 21...♖ae8!? 22 ♖de1 (22 ♘d2 ♗a4! 23 ♕xa4 ♘xe4 or 23 b3 ♕a1+ 24 ♘b1 ♗d7 25 ♖de1 b5 with equality) 22...♘h5 23 ♘d2 ♘g3 24 ♘f3 ♕h5 25 ♖hg1 b5 with counterplay, or even 21...♗e8!? (with the idea of ...♗g6 or ...♗h5) 22 ♘d2 ♗a4! 23 b3 (23 ♕xa4 ♘xe4 is equal) 23...♕a1+ 24 ♘b1 ♗e8!, when the attempt 25 ♗e1 ♘d7 26 e5!? enlivens the play, but does not promise White any advantage – 26...♗xe5 27 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 28 ♗d3 ♖g8 etc.

Incidentally, in the aforementioned game with Gheorghiu I too did not experience any difficulties, by retaining the f4-pawn.

22 gxf3 ♘h5 23 ♘d2 ♘f4 24 ♗f1



'A classic example of a blockaded position. The immediate targets are four white pawns, but the influence of the blockade is far deeper: the light-squared bishop has been transformed into a pawn, the knight's own pawns take away all its important squares, and in addition the queen, such a mobile piece, is almost completely constricted.' (Bronstein)

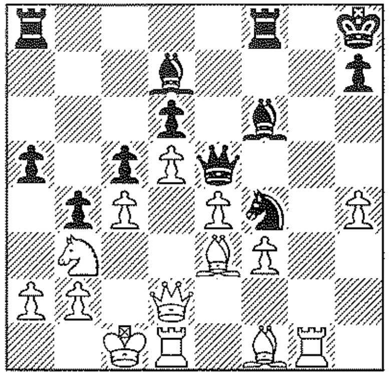
24...b5!

The long-awaited breakthrough. 'One can only be surprised at the potential defensive strength of White's position and the skill of Kotov, who maintains the balance, albeit with great difficulty.' (Bronstein)

25 h4 ♔h8 26 ♖g1 ♗f6 27 ♘b3 ♖ab8

'At the critical moment Gligoric does not display the required resolve and he continues systematically strengthening his position. Very strong was 27...b4 28 ♘a5 ♗a4 29 b3 when Black has at least perpetual check, but can play 29...♗d7, continuing the attack.' (Bronstein)

However, in the event of 27...b4 White could have set about evicting the blockading knight from f4: 28 ♗e3! a5 29 ♕d2.



Analysis diagram

Now it is no good to play 29...♗e7 30 ♘d4!, and 29...♗g7 30 ♖g5 ♕f6 (30...a4 31 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 32 ♘xc5 and wins) 31 e5 dxe5 32 ♘xc5, and 29...♘g6 30 ♔b1! (30 h5 ♘h4 31 ♗f4 ♕xf4! 32 ♕xf4 ♗xb2+ 33 ♔xb2 ♖xf4 or 30 f4 ♕xe4 31 ♗d3 ♕e8 32 ♖de1 ♕f7 is unclear) 30...♘xh4 31 ♗e2 a4 32 ♘c1 a3 33 ♘d3 ♕e7 34 b3 – this fortress cannot be breached, and White can calmly strengthen his position: 34...♖g8 35 ♗f2 ♘g6 36 ♖h1 ♖af8 37 ♖h5 ♘e5 38 ♖dh1, or 34...♗c3 35 ♗g5 ♕e8 36 ♕xc3+! bxc3 37 ♗xh4 h6 38 ♗e1! ♔h7 39 ♗xc3 ♖g8 40 ♖h1 ♕e7 41 ♗d2 ♖g6 42 ♖h5 ♖f8 43 ♖dh1 ♖ff6 44 ♘f4 etc.

There only remains 29...♗xh4 30 ♘d4! ♘g6! 31 ♗e2! (it is weaker to play 31 f4 ♘xf4 32 ♘f3 ♘d3+! 33 ♗xd3 ♖xf3) with complicated play: 31...♗f6 32 f4 ♕xe4 33 ♗d3 ♕xe3 34 ♕xe3 ♗xd4 35 ♕d2 ♘xf4 36 ♖h1 ♘xd3+

37 ♕xd3 ♗f5 38 ♕g3 ♗e5 39 ♕e3 a4 40 ♖df1 a3 41 b3, or 31...♘f4 32 ♘c6 ♕f6 33 ♗f1 ♘g6 34 f4! ♘xf4 35 e5! dxe5 36 ♗xc5 ♖fe8.

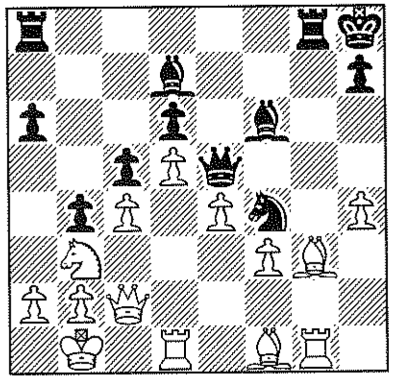
28 ♗e1

Kotov has planned a similar way of breaking the blockade (true, as we will see, an imperceptible error crept into his calculations). The pawn must be induced to advance to b4: if 28 ♗g3, then 28...bxc4! 29 ♗xc4 a5! 30 ♕h2 ♗g7 31 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 32 ♖g5 ♕f6 and Black is alright.

28...b4

The desperate counterattack 28...bxc4?! 29 ♗xc4 ♗b5 30 ♗c3 ♕xc3?! 31 bxc3 ♗xc4 32 ♖d2 ♖b5 33 ♖g4 ♗e5 is refuted by the 'human+computer' tandem with 34 ♘d4!? cxd4 35 cxd4 ♘e2+ 36 ♖xe2 ♗xe2 37 dxe5! ♗xf3! 38 ♖g5! ♖c5 39 ♕xc5 dxc5 40 e6 ♗xe4 41 d6! and the white pawns are irresistible.

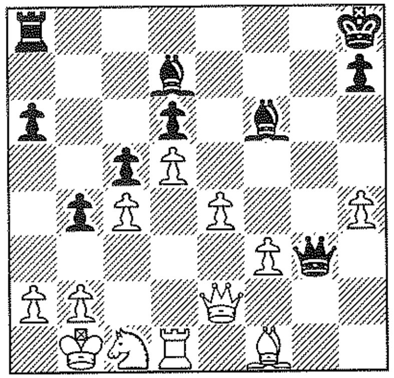
29 ♔b1 ♖a8 (Black has wasted time with his rooks and this should have been punished) **30 ♗g3 ♖g8**



31 ♕h2?

The desire to retain the h4-pawn diverts Kotov from the correct path. After 31 ♕d2! ♖xg3 32 ♖xg3 the exchange 32...♘e2(d3) 33 ♗xe2(xd3) ♕xg3 would have activated the congealed white pawns – 34 f4! and e4-e5, so that Gligoric would have had to seek a way to save the game after 32...a5 33 ♘c1!, for example: 33...a4 34 ♖g5! ♗xg5 35 hxg5 ♕xg5 36 ♘d3 ♖f8 37 ♗e2! ♕g3 38 ♘xf4 ♕xf4 39 ♕xf4 ♖xf4 40 ♖g1 h5 41 ♔c2! ♔h7 42 ♔d3, or 33...♗a4 34 ♖g4! ♗xd1 35 ♖xf4 ♗a4 36 ♖f5 ♕e7 37 ♕h6 ♗xh4 38 e5 ♗d7 39 ♖h5 and Black is in great difficulties.

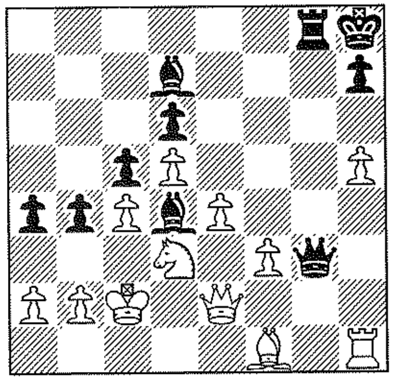
31...♖xg3 (a forced exchanging combination) **32 ♖xg3 ♘e2! 33 ♕xe2 ♕xg3 34 ♘c1**



Here, in contrast to the variations with 31 ♕d2!, White's queen and bishop are in each other's way, and Black has time to defend against f3-f4 and e4-e5. By this point both players were in time-trouble and were more concerned about the safety of their defences.

34...a5 35 ♘d3 ♗d4! (now e4-e5 loses its strength, and the powerful bishop at d4 equalises the chances) **36 h5 ♕h4 37 ♗g2 ♖g8 38 ♖h1 ♕g3 39 ♗f1 a4 40 ♔c2?**

Pseudo-activity by the king! Even 40 ♔c1 was better, to say nothing of 40 ♕d1 and ♗e2. But the last few moves before the control, with the flag about to fall, are subject to their own laws.



40...a3?

Throwing away the advantage that has suddenly been acquired – 40...b3+! 41 axb3 axb3+ 42 ♔xb3 ♕g7 'with winning chances' (Bronstein): 43 h6 ♗a4+! 44 ♔a2 (44 ♔xa4? ♕b7) 44...♕a7 45 ♔b1 ♗b3 46 ♘c1 ♖a8 47 ♘xb3 ♕a2+ 48 ♔c1 ♕xb3, or 43 ♔c2 ♖b8 (43...♗a4+!?) 44 ♔b1 ♗a4 45 ♖h2 (or 45 ♕g2) 45...♕a7! and White is in difficulties.

41 b3 ½-½

The sealed move. After adjournment analysis the players agreed a draw.

Later Botvinnik advised me to study the King's Indian Defence from the games by the classic interpreters of this opening, including Gligoric. And my attention was drawn to another original idea in the Sämisch Variation, which was conceived in the late 1950s.

This, incidentally, was the most successful and fruitful period in the Yugoslav grandmaster's career. Five times in succession (and eleven in all) he became champion of his country, he finished fourth in the Alekhine Memorial tournament in Moscow (1956), played brilliantly in the traditional Yugoslavia-USSR matches (defeating Petrosian, Smyslov, Keres, Korchnoi, Taimanov...), shared 1st-2nd places in a double-round tournament of eight grandmasters in Dallas (1957) and in the Portoroz Interzonal (1958), and at the tournament in Zurich (1959) he finished only half a point behind the phenomenal Tal, but ahead of Fischer, Larsen, and many other famous players. Add to this his best score on board 1 (+9=6, ahead of Botvinnik) at the Olympiad in Munich (1958) and it will become clear why Gligoric's result at the Candidates tournament in Yugoslavia (1959) – a share of 5th-6th places – was assessed by the press as 'a score, not in accordance with his consistently high achievements in recent years.'

So, in his games with Tal and Sherwin (Portoroz Interzonal 1958) Gligoric employed the counter ...h7-h5 in front of his king, which since then has become a universal defence against the g2-g4 attack when there is castling on opposite sides (and not only in the King's Indian). This idea was tested by the experts at the very highest level, then for a long time it faded into the background, but in the 1990s it was again seen in games of leading grandmasters. To illustrate its wealth of content, I will give one of my own games.

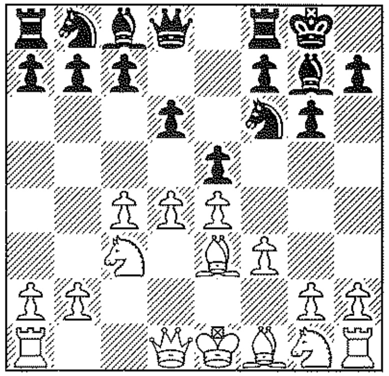
Game 11

V.Ivanchuk-G.Kasparov

Dos Hermanas 1996, 5th round

King's Indian Defence E89

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5



7 ♘ge2

After 7 d5 c6! (7...c5 – *Game No.10*) 8 ♕d2 cxd5 9 cxd5 a6 10 g4 ♘bd7 11 h4, 11...h5! is even stronger: 12 ♗g5 ♕a5 13 gxh5 ♘xh5 (with equality) 14 ♗e7?! ♖e8 (Tal-Gligoric, Portoroz Interzonal 1958), since 15 ♗xd6? ♕b6! is bad for White.

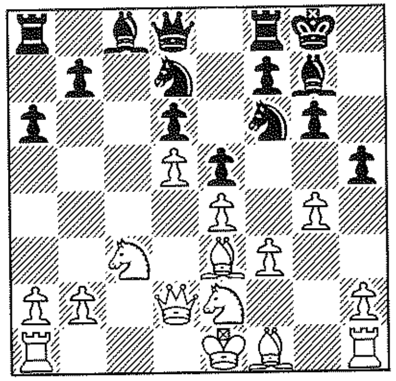
7...c6 8 ♕d2 (8 d5?! cxd5 9 cxd5 ♘e8 – *Volume 2, Game No.95*) **8...♘bd7 9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5 a6**

The modern move order, polished by tournament praxis.

11 g4 h5!

'The only move that conforms to the logic of events. It exploits the opponent's delay in developing his kingside and probes the dark-squared weaknesses, created by the move g2-

g4, which was once a fearful weapon in the Sämisch Variation.' (Gligoric)

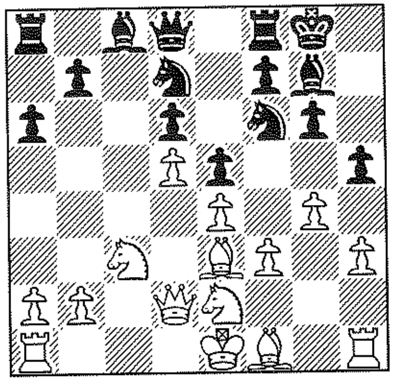


12 h3

This set-up underwent a serious test in the 10th game of the Botvinnik-Tal match (1960), where White employed the sharp plan with 12 ♗g5!? hxg4 13 fxg4 ♘c5 14 ♘g3 ♗xg4 15 b4 (15 h3 ♗f3!) 15...♘cd7 16 h3 ♗f3 17 ♖h2 and after 17...a5?! 18 b5 ♕b6 19 ♕f2! ♕xf2+ 20 ♖xf2 ♗h5 21 b6! he gained the advantage. But 17...♕b6! and ...♖fc8 would have been better (Tal).

After 12 g5 ♘h7 13 h4 it is possible to try both 13...b5 14 ♘g3 ♘b6 15 ♗d3 ♗d7 16 0-0-0 ♖c8 (Polugayevsky-Petrosian, 26th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959), and 13...f6 14 gxf6 ♖xf6 15 ♘g1 b5 (Szabo-Gligoric, Belgrade 1959), or even 15...♖f4?! 16 ♗xf4 exf4. In the opinion of Tal and Gligoric, 'Black's pluses are worth the sacrificed exchange,' but the computer monster coldly replies 17 ♕xf4 and demands detailed evidence. I would not play this position against a machine, but against a human – by all means.

At the end of the century there appeared 13 ♖g1!? f6 14 gxf6 ♕xf6 15 0-0-0 (Karpov-Dolmatov, Groningen 1993) or 14...♖xf6 15 0-0-0 (15 ♘c1 ♕e8!? 16 ♗e2 ♘c5) 15...b5 16 b3! ♘b6 17 ♔b2 ♗d7 18 ♘c1 ♗e8 19 ♗e2! (along with the b3-pawn – an important aid for White in the struggle for an advantage) 19...b4 20 ♘b1 a5 21 ♘d3 ♖f8 with a complicated game (Karpov-Topalov, 3rd match-game, Varna rapidplay 1995). Instead of 16...♘b6, 16...♘df8! would appear to be more successful, forcing the f1-bishop to occupy a passive position: 17 ♗g2 ♗d7 18 ♔b2 b4 19 ♘a4 ♖b8 and Black's chances are at least equal (Campos Moreno-Comas Fabrego, Catalonia 2000).



12...b5!

A novelty of the 1990s. The pioneers played the immediate 12...♘h7 with the idea of 13 0-0-0 (13 gxh5?! ♕h4+) 13...h4 14 ♔b1 ♗f6! and ...♗g5 (Sherwin-Gligoric, Portoroz Interzonal 1958), while if 13 h4 hxg4 14 fxg4 (Tal-Gligoric, Yugoslavia Candidates 1959), then 14...♘df6! 15 g5 ♘g4 (15...♘h5!?) 16 ♗g1 f6 (Geller) or 16...♗d7 with equality.

But 13 ♖g1! is better (Timman introduced this move back in the 1960s!) preventing the occupation of g5. For example: 13...h4 14 ♘c1! (14 0-0-0 b5!) 14...♔h8 (14...f6!? and ...♘g5) 15 ♘b3 ♗f6 16 g5 ♗e7 17 0-0-0 f6 18 gxf6 ♖xf6 19 ♗e2 ♕f8 (19...♘df8?! 20 f4!) 20 ♔b1 with advantage to White (Timman-Kasparov, Amsterdam 1996), or the somewhat passive 13...hxg4 14 hxg4 ♕h4+ 15 ♖g3 ♘c5 16 0-0-0 ♗d7 17 ♖h3 ♕e7 18 ♘g3 ♖ac8 19 ♔b1 f6 20 ♗e2 ♖c7 21 ♖dh1 ♘g5 with chances of equalising (Piket-Ivanchuk, Monaco rapidplay 1996).

The energetic move 12...b5!, beginning play over the entire board, was the modernisation of the plan with ...h7-h5.

13 ♗g5 ♕a5! 14 ♘d1

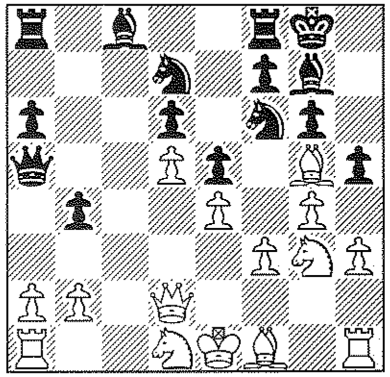
If 14 ♘g3 there follows the thematic 14...♘h7! 15 gxh5 (after 15 ♗e7 ♖e8 16 ♗xd6 Black can play 16...h4 17 ♘ge2 ♕b6 18 ♗a3 b4 19 ♘a4 ♕f6! 20 ♕xb4 ♘g5! 21 ♗g2 ♘xf3+ 22 ♗xf3 ♕xf3 23 ♖h2 ♗h6 with a powerful initiative) 15...♘xg5 16 ♕xg5 ♗f6 17 ♕h6 ♗g7 ½-½ (Kramnik-Nijboer, Groningen 1991).

14...b4!?

A couple of months earlier the game Piket-Kasparov (Amsterdam 1996) went 14...♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 ♘c5 16 ♘f2 ♗d7 17 gxh5 (not venturing 17 ♘g3 ♘h7 18 ♗e7 on account of 18...h4! 19 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 20 ♘e2 ♗h6+ 21 ♔e1 ♖c8, which is probably advantageous to Black) 17...♘xh5! 18 ♗e7 ♖fc8 19 ♗xd6 ♘b7 20 ♗e7 f6! 21 ♘d3 ♔f7 22 ♗a3 a5 with more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

15 ♘g3

The greedy 15 gxh5?! ♘xh5 16 ♗e7 might entice a computer, but not a human: 16...♗f6! 17 ♗xf8 ♗h4+ 18 ♘f2 ♔xf8 followed by ...♘c5, ...♗d7 and so on.



15...♘h7! 16 gxh5

Ivanchuk, like Kramnik, prefers the haven of a draw rather than the unclear position after 16 ♗e7 h4! 17 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 18 ♘e2 ♗f6 19 ♘e3 ♗g5, when the dark-squared bishop is not inferior to a rook.

16...♘xg5 17 ♕xg5 ♗f6 18 ♕h6 ♗g7 ½-½

As we see, the 11...h5! idea proved perfectly viable, harbouring reserves for improvement.

Of Gligoric's later successes I should mention his share of 3rd-5th places with Keres and Petrosian, behind Tal and Fischer, in Bled (1961) and his splendid play at the Olympiads of 1960 and 1962. Here, notably, he twice defeated Fischer, taking the score in his individual meetings with him to +4-1=6 (the future world champion recouped his losses only in the early 1970s, gaining five successive wins). At the 1964 Olympiad the leader of the Yugoslav team scored fewer points, but in the key match against the USSR with the black pieces he inflicted the only defeat on the great Botvinnik.

This duel had a very curious psychological context. Gligoric was such an inveterate King's Indian player that after opening 1 d4, his opponents, over the course of 25 years, could anticipate exactly what position would arise on the board. 'By rejecting the factor of surprise, I myself allowed my opponents the opportunity to demonstrate unexpected ideas,' – that was Gligoric's credo. However, there are no rules without exceptions: against Botvinnik 'already at the board I decided to deviate from my favourite King's Indian Defence, fearing some opening preparation by the former world champion.'

Game 12
M.Botvinnik-S.Gligoric
Tel Aviv Olympiad 1964
Grünfeld Defence D82

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5!?

Unexpected. 'Although I occasionally played this opening, here I managed to gain ten minutes on the clock: that was how long Botvinnik thought for, in deciding which variation to choose.' (Gligoric)

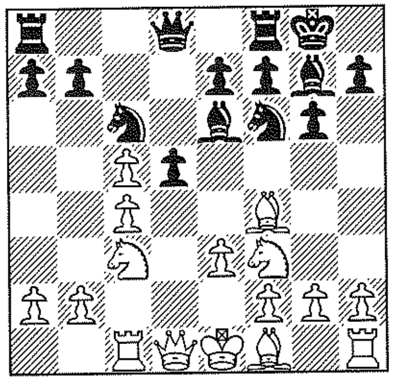
4 ♗f4 ♗g7 5 e3

'I simply mixed up the move order, playing 5 e3 instead of 5 ♘f3!, thereby allowing my opponent the opportunity to employ a variation that is advantageous to Black.' (Botvinnik)

5...0-0 (5...c5 – *Game No.29*) **6 ♖c1 c5 7 dxc5 ♗e6!**

As is well known, 7...♕a5?! 8 cxd5 ♖d8 is inferior, and now not 9 ♕a4 ♕xa4 10 ♘xa4 ♘xd5 (Capablanca-Reshevsky, AVRO tournament, Holland 1938), and not 9 ♕d2 ♘xd5 (Tolush-Botvinnik, 11th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1939), in each case with equality, but 9 ♗c4!

8 ♘f3 ♘c6



9 ♘g5!?

'I made this move automatically, forgetting that e2-e3 and ...♘c6 had already been played (without these moves, ♘g5 or ♘d4 is not bad),' explains Botvinnik, who then gives the 'poor' 9 ♕a4 ♘e4 10 ♗e2 ♗xc3+!? 11 bxc3 dxc4 with equality (Ragozin-Botvinnik, 8th matchgame, Leningrad 1940) and the 'best' 9 ♗e2, although after 9...♘e4! Black has active play for the pawn (Lyublinsky-Smyslov, Moscow 1944/45). Gligoric adds 9 ♘d4 ♘xd4 10 exd4 dxc4 with equality.

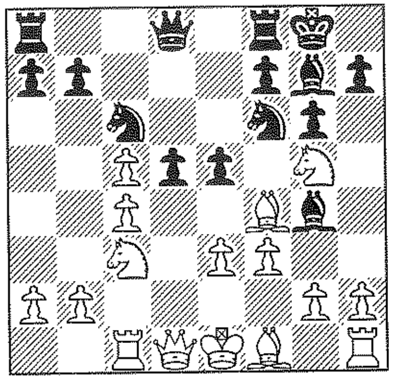
9...♗g4!

'I decided on this after 20 minutes' thought. I did not want to allow ♘xe6, and I didn't see any other way of exploiting the departure of the white knight from the centre. At the same time, I didn't know what I was doing: falling over a precipice or taking a brilliant decision that would give me good chances.' (Gligoric)

10 f3

'It was still possible to give preference to the quiet 10 ♗e2.' (Botvinnik) But after 10...♗xe2 11 ♔xe2 d4! or 11 ♕xe2 e5 12 ♗g3 d4 White experiences some discomfort.

10...e5!



Gambit play! 'Each time, when I found a successful reply to a prepared novelty, the commentators asserted that this reply had been found at home,' laments Gligoric. 'Not without bitterness I remember such comments being made about the piece sacrifice in my game with Botvinnik. In fact, such decisions are dictated not by some "boldness", but by a feeling of extreme danger, the realisation that you may be completely outplayed – so you sacrifice, in order that this does not happen.'

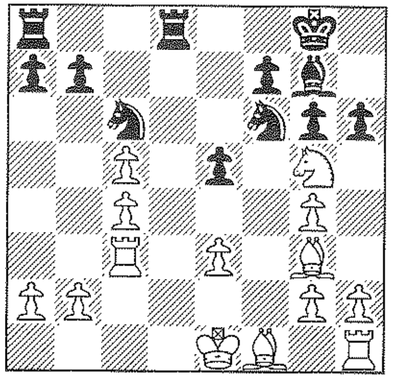
Taking account the grandmaster's glorious fighting past, here he probably felt more like a desperate partisan, launching himself with a grenade against a tank.

11 ♗g3?

Botvinnik does not comment at all on this important moment, while Gligoric writes: 'It is clear that 11 fxg4? exf4 12 cxd5 ♘xd5 is advantageous to Black. It was something else that I was unsure of: what would happen after 11 cxd5 exf4 (but not 11...♘xd5? 12 ♕xd5 ♗d7 13 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 14 ♗c4 and wins) 12 dxc6 (12 fxg4? ♘xd5!) 12...♕e7! with strong counterplay for the sacrificed piece.'

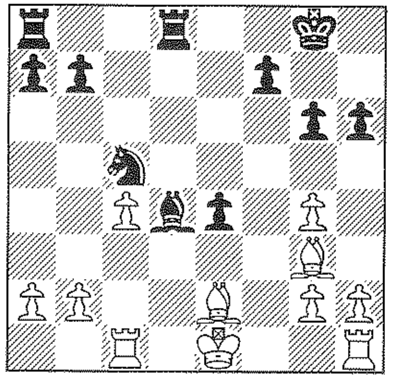
Today it can be added that after 13 e4 ♖ad8 14 ♗d3 (or 14 ♕c2 bxc6! 15 fxg4?! ♘xg4) 14...bxc6! 15 fxg4 ♘d7! Black does indeed have an excellent game (Dorfman-Tukmakov, 49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981) and that it is stronger to play 13 fxg4! ♕xe3+ 14 ♗e2 ♘xg4 15 ♘h3! (not 15 ♖f1 ♖ad8! 16 ♕c2 ♘xh2 Tukmakov) 15...♖ad8 16 ♕c2 with the idea of 16...f3 17 gxf3 ♘e5 18 ♔f1 ♘xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 20 ♘f2 ♕xc6 21 ♘ce4! or 16...♘e5 (Khalifman-Shipov, Russian Championship, Krasnoyarsk 2003) 17 c7! ♖d4! (Shipov) with a very sharp struggle.

11...d4! 12 fxg4 dxc3 13 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 14 ♖xc3 h6



'White thought it best to exchange queens, in order to safeguard his king, which is caught in the centre. For the moment he has a material advantage, but his pawn formation is clearly worse than the opponent's. In addition, thanks to the fact that Black's pieces are well placed he soon regains everything.' (Botvinnik)

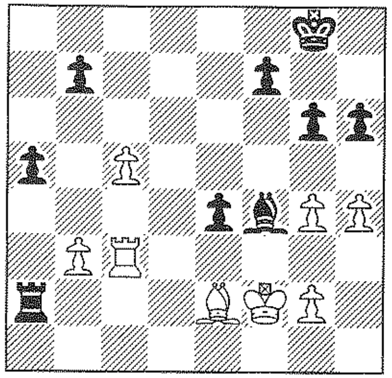
15 ♘f3 (after 15 ♘h3 ♘e4! 16 ♖b3 ♘xc5 17 ♖b5 b6 the rook would have found itself offside) **15...♘e4! 16 ♖c1 ♘xc5 17 ♗e2 e4 18 ♘d4** (this is the lesser evil) **18...♘xd4 19 exd4 ♗xd4**



20 b3

'If 20 b4, then 20...♘e6 with the unpleasant threat of 21...a5.' (Gligoric) However, a more forcing path is 20...♘a6! 21 b5 (21 ♖b1? ♘xb4; 21 a3? ♗b2) 21...♘b4 22 a4 ♖ac8 23 ♗f2 ♗b2! 24 ♖d1 ♘d3+ 25 ♗xd3 exd3 26 c5 ♗d4 or 22 c5 ♖ac8 23 a3 ♘a2 24 ♖c2 ♘c3, winning a pawn and the game.

20...♗e3 21 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 22 ♗xd1 ♖d8 23 ♗e2 a5 (23...♖d2? 24 ♗f2 with equality; 23...♘e6!? Botvinnik) **24 h4 ♘e6 25 ♖h3 ♗c1 26 ♗e5 ♘f4** (not 26...♖d2? 27 ♖c3) **27 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 28 c5 ♖d2 29 ♖c3** (29 a4 ♖c2) **29...♖xa2 30 ♔f2**



30...♖b2! and after a number of errors by both sides, Black won on the 79th move.

In 1967 Gligoric performed successfully in the Interzonal in Sousse (+7=14, share of 2nd-4th places) and again qualified for the Candidates event. After starting with a win in his quarter-final match with Tal (Belgrade), he was leading 3-2 after five games. But then Gligoric's play suffered a psychological slump, whereas Tal, by contrast, began playing with his former strength – and he won this difficult match (5½-3½). 'Naturally, the public supported their "Gliga" – that is how he is called by his friends and numerous admirers in Yugoslavia. But the match atmosphere – friendly and cordial – was equally favourable for both sides. And this was primarily to the credit of my opponent,' Tal later recalled.

From the late 1950s Gligoric combined intensive chess appearances with professional journalism – for seven years he worked as a political commentator and reporter for a leading Yugoslav daily. He also had enough energy to take an active part in chess organisation (I think that it was no accident that the historic 'Match of the Century', USSR v. Rest of the World, took place in Belgrade). But after the match with Tal he soberly admitted that this was the limit of his possibilities, and from then on, despite participating in a further two Interzonal tournaments, he effectively opted out of the battle for the chess crown and played simply for pleasure, while remaining a formidable opponent for any grandmaster.

This is shown by the following instructive game with Petrosian. The history of their individual meetings is quite bloodthirsty: +11-8=19 in favour of Petrosian, who went ahead only after three successive wins in the mid-1970s. The Yugoslav had an overwhelming score with White (+5), but suffered a disaster with Black (+3-11). However, on that April day in 1970 it all turned out differently.

Game 13
T.Petrosian-S.Gligoric
Rovinj-Zagreb 1970, 5th round
King's Indian Defence E97

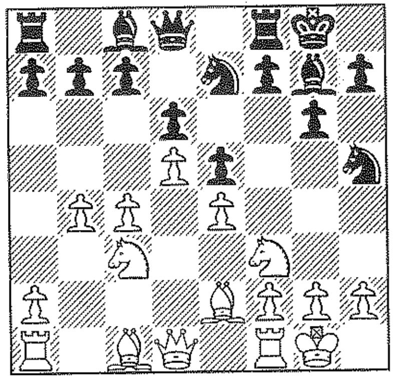
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0

Petrosian avoided his favourite 7 d5 ♘bd7 8 ♗g5, because his opponent was very confident in his handling of the variation 8...h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 ♘h5. A month earlier White had also achieved nothing after 8 ♕c2!? a5 9 ♗g5 (9 0-0 ♘c5 with equality) 9...h6 10 ♗e3 ♘g4 11 ♗d2 ♘c5 12 h3 ♘f6 13 ♗e3 ♘h7! with equality (Petrosian-Gligoric, Kapfenberg 1970).

7...♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 b4 (Taimanov's energetic move, which is currently very popular)

9...♘h5

At that time 9...♘e8 or 9...♘d7 was more often chosen, but Gligoric preferred 'an active reply: Black begins a battle on the part of the board where he is stronger.'



10 ♘d2

A novelty, devised at the board especially for his all-knowing opponent. Strangely enough, the move 9...♘h5 was not known to Petrosian: yet many games on this theme had been played in the 'pre-*Informator*' era. Nowadays games immediately appear on the Internet and thus the life of novelties is measured in hours. Modern professionals do not have the right to be forgetful – it is 'life threatening!'

The following has occurred many times: 10 g3 f5 11 ♘g5 (11 ♘e1?! ♘f6 12 f3 f4! 13 g4 g5 14 ♘d3 ♘g6 15 c5 h5 16 h3 ♖f7 Matulovic-Gligoric, Ljubljana 1960) 11...♘f6 12 f3 f4! (12...h6 13 ♘e6 ♗xe6 14 dxe6 c6 15 b5! Taimanov-Gligoric, Santa Fe 1960) 13 b5 h6 14 ♘e6 ♗xe6 15 dxe6 fxg3! 16 hxg3 ♕c8 17 ♘d5 ♕xe6 18 ♘xc7 ♕h3 with equality (Pachman-Taimanov, Havana 1967).

Against Uhlmann (Zagreb 1965) and Gligoric (Lugano 1970) Larsen unsuccessfully tried 10 c5?! ♘f4 11 ♗xf4 exf4. The drawbacks of this plan were also revealed in the game Kamsky-Kasparov (New York rapidplay 1994): 12 ♖c1 a5! 13 cxd6 cxd6 14 ♘b5 ♗g4 15 ♖c7 axb4 16 ♕d2 ♗xf3! 17 ♗xf3 ♗e5 18 ♖xb7 ♕a5 etc.

But in the mid-1990s the main line emerged – 10 ♖e1!, becoming popular largely thanks to some wins by Kramnik. However, here too Black increasingly often achieves good play: 10...a5 (10...f5 11 ♘g5 is also at the centre of attention) 11 bxa5 (11 ♗a3 ♘f4 12 ♗f1 ♗g4! Kramnik-Gelfand, Dortmund 1996) 11...f5! 12 ♘d2 ♘f6 13 c5 ♖xa5 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 a4 ♗h6 16 ♗a3 ♗xd2 17 ♕xd2 fxe4 18 ♗b5 ♗f5 19 h3 ♖a8 with equality (Kramnik-Smirin, Moscow rapidplay 2002).

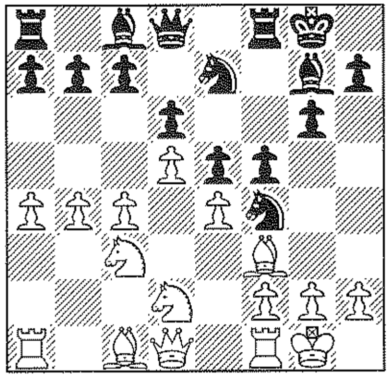
10...♘f4 11 a4

If 11 ♗f3, then 11...f5 with the idea of ...♔h8 and ...♘g8-f6 is good, while Gligoric recommended 11...♘d3 12 ♗a3 a5 (12...c5 is also interesting), having in mind something like 13 bxa5 ♖xa5 14 ♘b5 ♗d7!? (14...c6? 15 ♘b3!; 14...♘c5!? 15 ♘b3 ♘xb3 16 ♕xb3 ♗d7 17 ♗b4 ♖a6) 15 ♘b3 ♖a4 with a sharp struggle (Anand-Gelfand, Dortmund 1997).

11...f5

The pawn chains erected by the two players are about to collapse, and then the bishops will display their power. Therefore the exchange 11...♘xe2+ 12 ♕xe2 would have been a minor victory for Black, giving him a perfectly acceptable game after 12...f5 13 c5 fxe4 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 ♘dxe4 ♘f5.

12 ♗f3



'This move gave me a slight psychological shock, which lasted some five minutes. Perhaps this bishop should have been exchanged? Having overcome my confusion, I spent twenty minutes searching for the best reply at this critical moment of the battle. And I found what was evidently the only correct move.' (Gligoric)

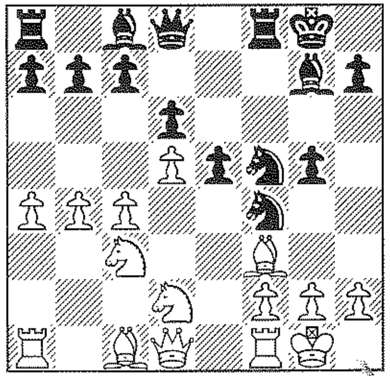
Clearly being a follower of Tarrasch, the Yugoslav grandmaster firmly believed in the existence of the best move in any position and in the fact that he was able to find it. It was this confidence that helped him to defeat Petrosian, who was racked by doubts and dissatisfaction.

12...g5

The exchange 12...fxe4?! 13 ♘dxe4 would have included the e7-knight in the play – 13...♘f5, but after 14 g3 ♘h3+ 15 ♔g2 White would have driven the other knight offside and gained an advantage: 15...♕d7 16 ♗g4 ♘e3+ 17 ♗xe3 ♕xg4 18 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 19 f3 ♗f5 20 ♘b5.

However, the move in the game also does not solve the problem of White's domination of the e4-square. Perhaps, therefore, 12...♔h8!? 13 a5 ♘g8 14 c5 ♘f6 was more promising, and only if 15 ♗a3 – 15...g5!

13 exf5 ♘xf5



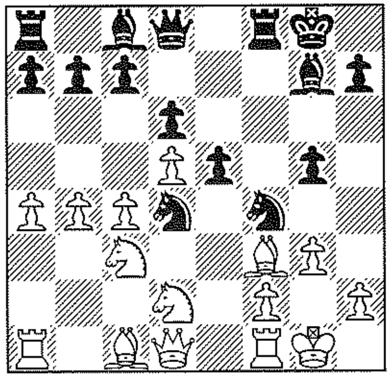
14 g3?!

A weakening, provoked by the fully understandable desire to play ♘de4, after excluding the variation 14 ♘de4?! ♘h4! 15 ♗xf4 (15 a5? ♘h3+!) 15...exf4, which would delight the black bishops. But 14 ♗e4! and ♘b3 was more solid, maintaining White's influence on events in the centre and quite good prospects.

14...♘d4!?

After prolonged thought Gligoric sacrifices a piece in the style of Tal! I think that on this occasion it was Petrosian who got a shock: imagine receiving such a 'gift' with the clock ticking away... Of course, he expected 14...♘h3+ (14...♘g6? 15 ♘de4 ♘d4 16 ♗xg5!) 15 ♔g2 and was not afraid of the dashing attack 15...g4?! 16 ♗xg4 ♘xf2 in view of 17 ♔xf2 ♘h6+ 18 ♗f3 ♘g4+ 19 ♔e2 ♘xh2 20 ♘ce4 ♘xf1 21 ♔xf1.

However, later the unexpected manoeuvre 15...♕d7! was found, giving Black sufficient counterplay: 16 ♘b3 (16 ♗g4? ♘xf2!; 16 ♘de4? ♘d4 17 ♗h5 ♘f4+!) 16...♘d4 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♘b5 c6! 19 ♘a3 ♖xf3 20 ♕xf3 g4 21 ♕b3 ♕e7 22 ♖a2 ♗f5 (Keene-Kavalek, Teesside 1975), or 16 ♗e4 g4! 17 ♘b3 ♕e7 (Mannion-Smirin, Las Vegas 1997).



15 gxf4 (this condemns White to a difficult defence, but there is nothing else: 15 ♗g4? ♗xg4 16 ♕xg4 ♘de2+! 17 ♘xe2 h5, trapping the queen) **15...♘xf3+**

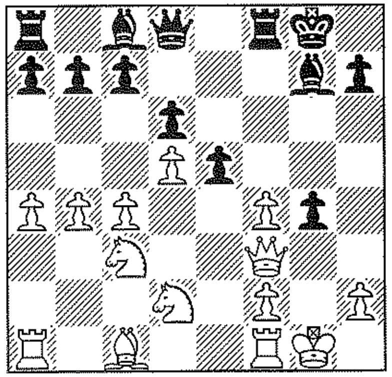
After 15...exf4, apart from 16 ♘de4 ♘xf3+ 17 ♕xf3 g4 18 ♕d1, transposing into a position which could have arisen in the game, it is also possible to play 16 ♗g4 (16 ♗e4?! f3 17 ♖a3 g4!) 16...f3! (Geller's recommendation 16...♗xg4?! 17 ♕xg4 f3 is not good on account of 18 ♘de4! ♘e2+ 19 ♘xe2 fxe2 20 ♕xe2 ♗xa1 21 ♗xg5) 17 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 18 ♔h1! ♘e2 19 ♘xe2 fxe2 20 ♕xe2 ♗xa1 21 ♘e4! with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

16 ♕xf3

According to Gligoric, it was more cautious to try 16 ♘xf3 exf4 (not 16...e4? 17 ♘xg5! ♗xc3 18 ♖a3 ♗g7 19 ♖g3 and wins) 17 ♗b2 g4 18 ♔h1, 'returning the piece in order to restore the balance' (18...gxf3 19 ♖g1 ♔h8 20 ♕xf3 ♗e5 with equality), but 18 ♘d4!? comes into consideration.

The immediate 16...g4! is more accurate, and if 17 ♔h1, then 17...gxf3 18 ♕xf3 ♗f5 19 ♖g1 ♗g6 20 ♗d2 ♕d7 21 ♘e4 ♖ae8 with equality (Smirin). However, here too after 17 ♘d2!? exf4 18 ♘de4 Black still has to seek real compensation for the piece.

16...g4!



Gligoric's pretty idea, although it involves a risk, is psychologically very effective. It is one of those 'Tal instances', when the opponent finds a defence... after the game.

17 ♕h1?

'I did not expect such a passive reply. However, such manoeuvres are typical of Petrosian's original style: in one of his games (Zagreb 1965), with his king on h1 and pawns on f2, g2 and h2 he unexpectedly played ♕e1-g1, defending his h2-square and freeing his hands on the queenside, where he in fact decided the game in his favour,' writes Gligoric, recommending 17 ♕d3 ♗f5 18 ♘de4 exf4 19 ♗xf4 (19 ♖e1 f3 20 ♗b2 ♖e8 and ...♕h4 with equality) with the return of the piece: 19...♗xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♗xc3 21 ♖a3 ♕f6 with equality. However, 18 ♘ce4!? exf4 19 ♖b1 and ♗b2 comes into consideration.

I think, nevertheless, that 17 ♕h1? was not the fruit of Petrosian's original style, but the consequence of extreme dissatisfaction with his play. Upset by the unexpected turn of events, he was unable to force himself to solve some difficult (but perfectly solvable!) problems.

'It is often debated what is meant by a chess player's "poor form",' writes Petrosian. 'I realised that by hiding my king in the corner I would come under a strong attack, and yet rather than a probable draw after 17 ♕d3 exf4 18 f3! ♗f5 19 ♘de4 gxf3 20 ♖xf3 ♗xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♗xe4 22 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ 23 ♕g3 ♕xg3+ 24 hxg3 ♖xf4 25 ♗xf4 a5 26 bxa5 ♖xa5 27 ♖e1 ♗g6 28 ♖e7 ♖c5 29 ♗h6 ♖xc4 30 ♖g7+ ♔h8 31 ♖d7 ♔g8 32 ♖g7+ I preferred an essentially certain loss. Is it not such an unfortunate choice out of several possibilities that is an indication of poor form?'

It seems to me that 17 ♕d1!? exf4 18 ♘de4 is more interesting (as has already been mentioned, this position could also have risen by a different move order). However, Petrosian was hoping to liberate his queen from h1 by advancing his h2-pawn, but a convenient opportunity for this was missed on the very next move and was no longer present afterwards.

17...exf4 18 ♗b2?!

'A series of bad moves, once it has begun, is sometimes hard to halt.' (Petrosian) Of course, one wants to exchange the powerful bishop at g7 as soon as possible, but the place for the bishop was at d2, where it could have defended the rook at e1 and given the queen the opportunity to came back into play.

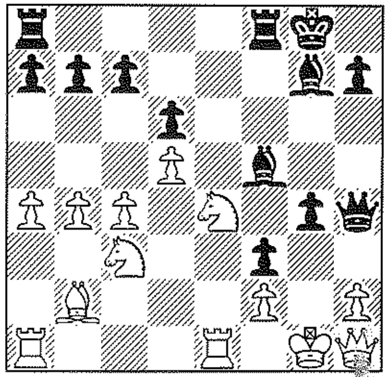
Petrosian thought that 18 ♖a3 was best, but after 18...♕h4 19 ♘de4 ♗e5 20 ♗d2 ♗f5 21 ♖e1 ♖ae8 followed by ...♖e7, ...♖fe8, ...f4-f3! and a move by the bishop from e5 White would have had to find a way to avoid a catastrophe on the back rank (the fault lying with the ♔g1 and ♕h1 'sweethearts'). Therefore the immediate 18 ♘de4! is correct, and if 18...♕h4 19 ♗d2 ♗e5 even 20 f3 ♗d4+ 21 ♖f2 is possible, while if 18...♗f5 19 ♗d2 ♕e8 – 20 ♖ae1 ♕g6 21 h4! gxh3+ 22 ♔h2 f3 23 ♖g1 ♗e5+ 24 ♘g3 ♗g4 25 ♖xe5! and ♘ge4. Or 18...f3 19 ♗d2 ♕h4 and after 20 ♘g3 ♗e5 21 ♖fe1 ♗f5 22 ♖a3 ♖ae8 23 ♘d1! White avoids the dangers by making use of the transit point e3.

18...♗f5 19 ♖fe1 (if 19 ♘d1?! ♗xb2 20 ♘xb2, then 20...♕f6! 21 ♖a2 ♕d4 is unpleasant) **19...f3** (the trap snaps shut) **20 ♘de4**

A difficult choice. 'Black would also have had a strong attack after 20 h4.' (Gligoric) He evidently had in mind 20...gxh3 21 ♘xf3 (21 ♕xf3? ♕g5+; 21 ♘f1 ♕g5+ 22 ♔h2 ♕f4+) 21...♗g4 22 ♘d2 (22 ♖e3 ♗h6) 22...♕h4 etc.

It was also unattractive to play 20 ♘xf3 gxf3 21 ♕xf3 ♕h4 22 ♘d1 ♗xb2 23 ♘xb2 ♖f6! with the initiative, or 20 ♘f1 ♕h4 21 ♘e3 (this is better than 21 ♘d1 ♗xb2 22 ♘xb2 ♕f6! or 21 ♖e3 ♗d4 22 ♖ae1 ♖ae8! 23 ♘d1 ♗xe3 24 ♘dxe3 ♗d3 25 h3 ♗xf1 26 ♔xf1 g3) 21...♗g6 22 ♖a2 ♖ae8 with excellent compensation for the piece.

20...♕h4



'Threatening a possible ...♕h3, shutting in the white queen for ever.' (Petrosian)

21 h3?

The direct route to the scaffold. For some reason everyone has overlooked the move 21 ♘d1!, which maintains the intrigue: 21...♗xb2 22 ♘xb2 ♕h3 (killing the resource h2-h3) 23 ♖e3 ♗xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖fe8 25 ♖ae1 (and if 25...♕h5, then 26 h3!), or 21...♕h3 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 ♘g3 and it is not apparent how

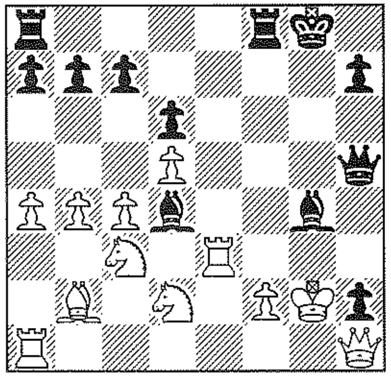
Black can exploit the stalemated position of the queen at h1. A more cunning idea is 21...♗h6!? 22 ♗c1 (after 22 ♗d4 ♗xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖ae8 both 24 ♘c3 ♗d2 25 ♖d1 ♗xc3! 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 ♗xc3 ♖e2, and 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♘e3 ♗xe3!? 26 fxe3 ♖f8 or 26 ♗xe3 ♕f6! are dangerous) 22...♖ae8! 23 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 24 ♘dc3 ♖e5 25 h3! (but not 25 ♖e3 ♖fe8 26 ♖ae1 ♗xe4 27 h3? g3! 28 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 29 ♕xf3 gxf2+ 30 ♔xf2 ♖xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♖f8 and wins) 25...♕g7 26 hxg4 ♗xe4 27 ♘xe4 ♕e7 28 ♕h6 ♖xe4 with advantage to Black, although it is rather early to speak of him winning.

21...♗e5! 22 ♖e3 (also fatal is 22 ♘d1 ♖ae8, or 22 hxg4 ♕xg4+ 23 ♔f1 ♗xc3 24 ♗xc3 ♗xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 26 ♕g1+ ♕g6)

22...gxh3 23 ♕xf3 ♗g4!

The queen is again driven into the corner, and the final agony begins.

24 ♕h1 h2+ 25 ♔g2 (25 ♔f1 ♖f3!) **25...♕h5! 26 ♘d2 ♗d4!**



27 ♕e1

If 27 ♖ae1 Black mates with the elegant 27...♗h3+! 28 ♖xh3 ♖xf2+ 29 ♔g3 ♕g5.

27...♖ae8! 28 ♘ce4 ♗xb2 29 ♖g3 ♗e5 30 ♖aa3 ♔h8 31 ♔h1 ♖g8 32 ♕f1 ♗xg3 33 ♖xg3? ♖xe4 0-1

A severe psychological defeat for Petrosian!

Incidentally, at the start of this tournament Gligoric also won a King's Indian duel against Smyslov, and in the end he shared 2nd-5th places with Smyslov, Korchnoi and Hort, behind the irrepressible Fischer. Petrosian finished sixth, half a point behind the quartet, after losing only one game in the 17 rounds (see above). So should he have talked about his poor form? It was more probable that on that day he was simply not ready for a fierce struggle – such a condition is familiar to professionals.

After becoming an international arbiter in 1972, Gligoric subsequently controlled a number of events, including my matches with Korchnoi (London 1983) and Karpov (Moscow 1984/85). Alas, during the days of the scandalous conclusion to the Moscow match, which was terminated after numerous delays, he was unable to oppose the dictate of the Soviet authorities and the FIDE President Campomanes. When, for the umpteenth time I demanded an explanation of what was happening, the Yugoslav grandmaster sadly lamented: 'You know, in this matter I am no more than a doorkeeper.' Indeed, what could the chief arbiter do here, if in Baguio (1978) even the FIDE President Euwe had been unable to defend Korchnoi against Soviet aggression? In my view, this is one of the troubles with modern world chess: genuine experts have been pushed aside by politicians.

I play against Pieces – this is what Gligoric called his book of selected games, explaining: 'Chess is a struggle with oneself. I never play against the opponent, I play against his pieces.' The judgements of this chess fighter have not lost their value even today:

'Chess has entered a highly professional era. Every year hundreds of games that are important for opening theory are played. Those who take part regularly in competitions are obliged to process the constantly expanding information and to spend an increasing amount of time at the board *(now at the computer – G.K.)*, analysing new games and preparing for coming encounters. Your way of life has to be completely subordinate to your chess activity. But all the same you can't retain everything in your head, and therefore many try to make life easier by restricting their opening repertoire.

'Nowadays it is not often that one improvises at the board. Many aim to employ a definite variation, well prepared for play against a specific opponent. However, no one is guaranteed against opening surprises. In this case one is forced to seek the best solution at the board. On finding myself in such a situation, I would usually cope with the problems, by following the principle of "the decisive moment": you have to find the correct, sometimes even the only correct move or entire plan, that will refute the opponent's idea. Usually I was helped by the conviction that novelties by my opponents in variations well known to me were unlikely to be positionally well-founded, and therefore I could and should find their defects and their refutation.'

I should add that Gligoric, on the basis of his own experience, considered the optimal age of a chess player to be 33-36. But today, with the appearance of powerful computers and the Internet, chess is rapidly growing younger. There has been a revolutionary change, not only in the process of preparation, but also in chess thinking itself: now there is little sense in relying, as before, on general evaluations of the type 'unclear' or 'with compensation' – you have to think very concretely. Instead of deep reflection and philosophising at the board, what has come to the forefront is the ability to calculate intensively and to maintain extreme concentration of thought throughout the game. Computer programs help young talents to quickly acquire the necessary knowledge, since a tenacious young memory can store a great amount of information, and deficiencies in positional understanding are compensated by precise calculation and the ability to maintain the tension of the struggle. By contrast, the brain of a player older than thirty, tired out by the constant effort, gradually gets rid of the information that is overfilling it and increasingly, in the interests of self-preservation, suddenly switches off at the most inappropriate moment...

At the time when I am writing these lines, Svetozar Gligoric has already turned 80, but he is still full of spirit and is respected throughout the chess world.

A modest little Pawn Move

Let us now turn to another variation which also bears Petrosian's name – in the Queen's Indian Defence: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 a3!? or 4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 a3!? His contribution here is possibly not so significant as in the King's Indian, but in its time the plan with a2-a3 was a revolutionary step. This was also played by Simagin, but it was Petrosian who breathed life into this idea and gave it wide international recognition.

From the viewpoint of classical chess, the move a2-a3 in the Queen's Indian Defence looks completely senseless. In fact it incorporates a very deep prophylactic idea. By preventing ...♗b4, White maintains the pressure of the c3-knight on the d5- and e4-squares – paradoxically, this is a struggle for the centre! As for the bishop, which is accustomed to the route f8-b4xc3, Black is forced to develop it differently. That is, it destroys the flexible construction with ...♘f6, ...♗b7, ...♗b4xc3, ...d7-d6, ...♘bd7 and so on (Karpov and many other leading players play this constantly: they simply like this flexible position). By deviating from the traditional Queen's Indian set-ups, White sharply changes the character of the play, immediately forcing the opponent to solve the problem of control over the central squares.

Of course, during the intervening decades a number of ways of combating this cunning, venomous variation have been found, but even so to this day 4 a3 (or 4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 a3) is no less popular than the classical 4 g3. Moreover, in the 1980s there was even a period when the Petrosian Variation practically supplanted the Nimzo-Indian Defence and the Queen's Indian with 4 g3.

But we will focus on one of the first attempts, which was made during the Zonal 28th USSR Championship (Moscow 1961) – Tigran Petrosian's second 'gold'.

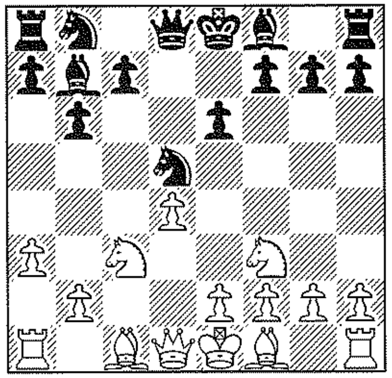
Game 14
T.Petrosian-V.Smyslov
28th USSR Championship, Moscow 1961
Queen's Indian Defence E12

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 d4 ♗b7 5 a3 d5

The most natural reaction. It is inferior to play 5...d6 (Simagin-Smyslov, 22nd USSR Championship, Moscow 1955). It is very important that the variation's baptism of fire takes place at the very highest level: Black's position is upheld by the great Smyslov!

6 cxd5 ♘xd5

It is this capture, rather than 6...exd5, that corresponds with Vasily Vasilievich's chess philosophy. The capture with the pawn is hardly any worse – it is simply slightly more passive and creates a different structure, which is not to the taste of many players. After the active 6...♘xd5, on the other hand, White has the opportunity to create a mobile pawn centre.



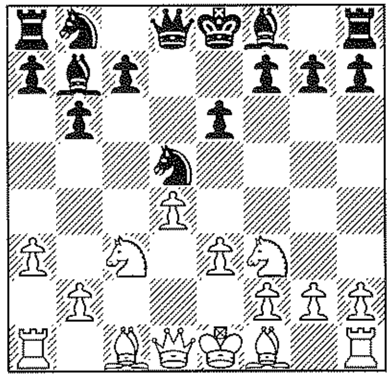
7 e3

The good old classical move. At that time it seemed the most fundamental and White did not yet see the need to change anything. Other ideas emerged later on:

1) 7 ♗d2 ♘d7 (7...c5?! 8 e4! ♘xc3 9 ♗xc3 ♗xe4 10 ♘e5 with an attack) 8 ♕c2 (8 ♘xd5!? exd5 9 g3) 8...c5 (8...♘5f6!? 9 e4 c5 Tukmakov-Polugayevsky, Kiev 1984) 9 ♘xd5!? (9 e4 ♘xc3 10 ♗xc3 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 a6) 9...exd5 10 dxc5 bxc5 11 e3 ♗e7 12 ♗d3 (Kamsky-Karpov, 10th matchgame, Elista 1996) or 9...♗xd5 10 e4 ♗b7 11 d5! exd5 12 exd5 ♗d6 13 0-0-0 0-0 14 ♗b5 (Dreev-Tiviakov, Dos Hermanas 2003), in both cases with tense play;

2) 7 ♕c2. The most popular. Here it is dubious to play 7...♘d7 8 ♘xd5 exd5 9 ♗g5 (Kasparov-Karpov, 32nd matchgame, Moscow 1984/85), and 7...c5 8 dxc5! (after 8 e4 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 Black fails to equalise by 9...♘c6 10 ♗b2! ♖c8?! 11 ♖d1! or 9...♗e7?! 10 ♗b5+ ♗c6 11 ♗d3!, as in my games with Murey and Gheorghiu, Moscow Interzonal 1982, but here he has 9...♘d7! 10 ♗d3 ♕c7! with equality, Kasparov-Sosonko, Lucerne Olympiad 1982) 8...♗xc5 9 ♗g5 ♕c7 10 ♖c1 h6 11 ♗h4 a5 12 ♘a4 ♘d7 13 e4! with the initiative (Kasparov-Van der Wiel, Amsterdam 1988).

7...♘xc3! is the most accurate reply, for example: 8 ♕xc3 ♘d7 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 11 g3 (or 11 e3 ♖c8 12 ♗e2 c5! with equality, Portisch-Karpov, Biel 1996) 11...♘f6 12 ♗g2 ♕d6 13 b4 ♖ad8 with approximate equality (Bareev-Karpov, Belgrade 1996), or 8 bxc3 ♘d7 9 e4 c5 10 ♗f4 ♗e7 11 d5 exd5 12 exd5 0-0 13 ♖d1, and now 13...♖e8 (Krasenkow-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 2003), or even 13...g5!? 14 ♗e3 g4 15 ♘g1 f5 (Radjabov-Kramnik, Linares 2003).



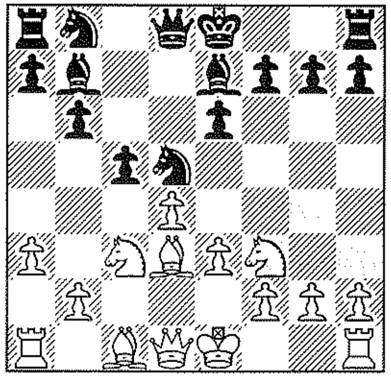
7...♗e7

A more critical alternative is 7...g6!? – the modern interpretation: a hybrid of two defences, the Queen's Indian and Grünfeld. There can follow 8 ♗b5+ (8 h4!? Polugayevsky-Korchnoi, London 1984) 8...c6 9 ♗d3 ♗g7 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 c5 12 ♗g5 ♕d6 (Kasparov-Korchnoi, 1st matchgame, London 1983; my only defeat against Korchnoi!) or 9 ♗a4!? ♗g7 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♗a6! 12 h4 ♕c7 13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♗f4 h6 15 ♕c1 0-0-0 16 ♕e3 c5 17 ♘d2 ♔b8 with sharp play (Kasparov-Timman, Amsterdam 1991).

Largely because of this new reply, White lost interest in 7 e3. But for Smyslov ...g7-g6 would have been too revolutionary! Besides, what is the difference: why not play ...♗e7 here?

8 ♗b5+ (it is important to create at least a little disorder in the black ranks) **8...c6 9 ♗d3 c5**

Not a bad move, although later Black began avoiding the resulting positions. After 9...0-0 White immediately seizes control of the centre by 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3, which, however, is not so terrible. But the main *tabiya* is 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 c5 11 0-0 (*Game No.45*).



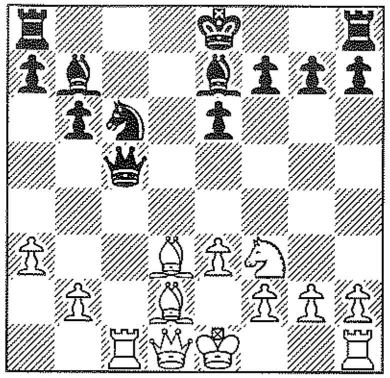
10 ♘xd5!? (an additional chance; if 10 e4 the simplest is 10...♘xc3, although there is also 10...cxd4?! 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 e5 with the initiative) **10...♕xd5**

A risky sortie. It was more cautious to play 10...exd5 11 b3 with a minimal advantage for White.

11 dxc5 ♕xc5

Later 11...♗xc5 12 ♗b5+ ♔e7 13 ♕e2 a5 14 ♗d2 was also tried, with an obvious advantage to White (Gheorghiu-Karpov, Moscow 1981). The position looks almost symmetric, but in the placing of the black pieces there is a barely perceptible lack of harmony, and Petrosian begins methodically exploiting it.

12 ♗d2! ♘c6 13 ♖c1



13...♕d6?!

Smyslov makes the most 'solid' move on general grounds, failing to sense all the dangers lurking in the position: a symmetrical structure often leads to complacency. The only way to retain equalising chances was by 13...♕d5 14 ♕c2 ♖c8 (after 14...♖d8?! 15 ♗e4! ♘b4! 16 ♕a4+ ♕d7 17 ♕xd7+ ♖xd7 18 ♗xb7 ♘d3+ 19 ♔d1! ♖xb7 20 ♖c8+ ♗d8 21 ♔e2 ♘c5 22 ♖c1 Black has an inferior endgame: 22...♔d7 23 ♖a8 f6 24 ♖d1, or 22...0-0 23 b4 ♘e4 24 ♗e1 ♗f6 25 ♖1c7 ♖xc7 26 ♖xc7 ♖a8 27 a4 b5 28 a5 a6 29 ♖c6) 15 ♗e4 (if 15 ♗c3, then 15...♕h5 and ...0-0) 15...♕d7 16 ♗c3 f5 17 ♗d3 0-0 18 0-0 ♗d6 19 ♖fd1 ♘e7.

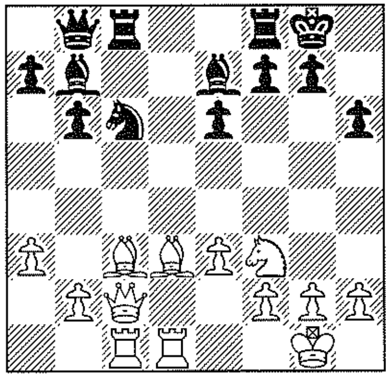
14 ♕c2 ♖c8 15 0-0 h6

Black has definite problems: 15...g6 looks bad. Even so, perhaps this was the lesser evil, although after 16 ♗c3 0-0 17 ♖fd1 ♕b8 18 b4 White would have retained a stable advantage.

16 ♖fd1 0-0 17 ♗c3 ♕b8

The white bishops, trained on the kingside, create obvious difficulties for Black: 17...♕c5 (recommended by Petrosian) 18 ♗h7+ (18 b4?! ♕h5 19 ♗h7+ ♔h8 20 ♖d7? ♘xb4! 21 axb4 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 ♗f6) 18...♔h8 19 ♖d7 ♗a8 (19...♘d8? 20 ♗e4) 20 ♗e4 ♖fd8 21 b4 ♕h5 22 ♖cd1 with a great advantage, close to decisive.

It follows that this symmetry is only apparent. Note the qualitative difference in the placing of the two sides' pieces. About the bishops it has already been said – Black's are clearly inferior to White's. The knight at c6 is rather passive, and it would stand far better at f6. The black queen rushes about the board, not knowing where to go. It finally hides at b8, but here too White finds an elegant manoeuvre.



18 ♕a4!

'A simple move, but one of murderous strength. The switch of the queen to the kingside enables White to obtain an irresistible attack.' (Petrosian) Nowadays this manoeuvre has become typical, classical. It is not altogether clear how Black should defend his king, although at first sight there are as yet no direct grounds for concern.

18...♖fd8

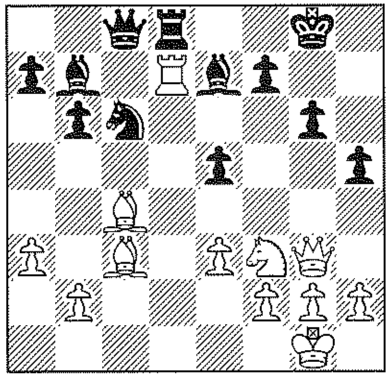
If 18...g6 Petrosian studied 19 ♗e4, but it is also good to play 19 ♕g4 h5 20 ♕h3 ♖cd8 (20...♖fd8? 21 ♗xg6) 21 g4 ♖d5 22 e4 ♖xd3 23 ♖xd3 ♕f4 24 ♖cd1 ♕xe4 25 gxh5 g5 26 ♖e3, or the very logical 19 h4!? (threatening h4-h5) 19...h5 20 ♕c2 ♔h7 21 b4 ♘d8 22 ♕e2, in both cases with powerful pressure. It is evident that there are already too many weaknesses in Black's position.

19 ♕e4 (provoking more weaknesses; here too 19 h4!? was possible) **19...g6 20 ♕g4 h5** (if 20...♔h7?, then 21 ♗xg6+! fxg6 22 ♕xe6 ♖f8 23 ♖d7) **21 ♕h3 f5?**

The decisive mistake, catastrophically weakening the e6- and g6-squares. The last chance was 21...e5!?, although it is most likely that this 'terrible' move was not even considered by the two players:

1) 22 ♗xg6?! fxg6 23 ♕e6+ ♔f8 24 ♕xg6 (24 ♗xe5 ♖xd1+ 25 ♖xd1 ♖d8! 26 ♖c1 ♕c8 27 ♕xg6 ♘xe5 28 ♕h6+ ♔g8 29 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 30 ♕e6+ ♔f8 is unclear) 24...♖xd1+! (but not 24...♕c7? 25 ♕f5+ ♔g8 26 ♕e6+ ♔f8 27 ♗xe5!) 25 ♖xd1 ♖d8 26 ♕h6+ with only perpetual check;

2) 22 ♗c4! (I think that Petrosian would have played this, increasing the pressure on f7 and on the e-pawn) 22...♖xd1+ (22...e4 23 ♘h4! ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♖d8 25 ♖d7!) 23 ♖xd1 ♖d8 24 ♖d7! ♕c8 25 ♕g3!



Analysis diagram

25...♕xd7? 26 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 27 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 28 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 29 ♗xe5!, or 25...♖xd7? 26 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 27 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 28 ♕xf7+ ♔h6, and here 29 ♕e6+ ♔h7 30 ♕h3+ ♔g7 31 ♕g4+ ♔h6 32 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 33 ♗xe5 ♖d1+ 34 ♕xd1 ♕xc4 is unclear, although the uncommonly paradoxical move 29 ♗b3!! wins, for example:

a) 29...♖d3 30 ♗c2 ♕d7 31 ♘d4!! (a very pretty stroke!) 31...♘xd4 32 exd4 ♕g4 33 ♗d2+! ♖xd2 34 ♕h7+ ♔g5 35 ♕xe7+, or 33...♗g5 34 ♕f6+ ♔h5 35 ♕h8+;

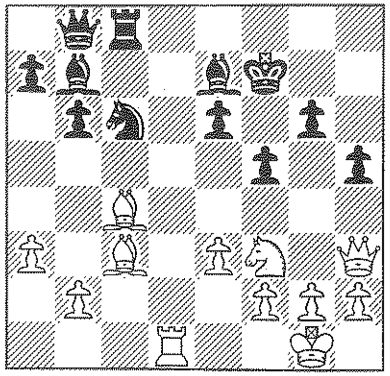
b) 29...♘d8! 30 ♕g8 ♗xf3 31 ♕h8+ ♔g6 32 ♕xe5! ♕c6 33 ♗c2+ ♔f7 34 ♕g7+ ♔e8 35 ♗g6+ ♘f7 36 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 37 gxf3 ♖d1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕b5! Purely computer-like resourcefulness, unnerving for a human, but the machine does not fear such counterattacks: after the continuation 39 ♗f5 (39 f4!?; 39 h4!?) 39...♕f1+ 40 ♔g3 ♕g1+ 41 ♔f4 ♕xh2+ 42 ♔e4 ♕h6 43 ♗g6 White's king hides from the checks and the outcome is decided by his passed pawns.

Therefore after 25 ♕g3! there only remains 25...♔f8, agreeing to a difficult defence after 26 ♖xd8+ (26 ♖d5!?) 26...♕xd8 (or 26...♗xd8 27 h3! ♗f6 28 ♘g5) 27 h4! ♕d1+ (27...e4?! 28 ♕f4! ♕d1+ 29 ♘e1 ♘d8 30 ♗b5 ♗c6 31 ♗xc6 and ♕xe4) 28 ♔h2 e4!? (28...♗d6(f6) 29 e4 and ♗d5!) 29 ♕f4! (29 ♘d2 ♕g4! is unclear) 29...♗d6 30 ♘e5 ♘xe5 31 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 32 ♕xe5 ♕d7 (32...♕c2 33 ♕b8+ ♔g7 34 ♗xf7!) 33 b3! a6 (if 33...a5 or 33...♗c6, then 34 ♕f6!) 34 a4 ♔g8 35 ♕f6 etc.

It is surprising how quickly Black (and this was the great Smyslov!) ran into very difficult problems: already a move such as 21...e5!? had to be made. In fact, as I have already said, what tells is White's enormous advantage in the placing of his pieces (say, the c6-knight against the f3-knight: it is clear that one knight is restricted by the other and has no future at all). In addition, Black has lost the battle for the centre.

22 ♗c4 ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♔f7

Black is still harbouring some hopes of a successful defence, but the following energetic blow dispels this illusion. See how spectacular the end of the game is – this is another refutation of the myth that Petrosian was not very confident in complicated, highly tactical positions.



24 e4!

The situation demands a decisive blow, and Petrosian (I think, without particular hesitation) lands it. In the event of the direct 24 ♖d7? ♖d8! the white queen at h3 would have remained out of play.

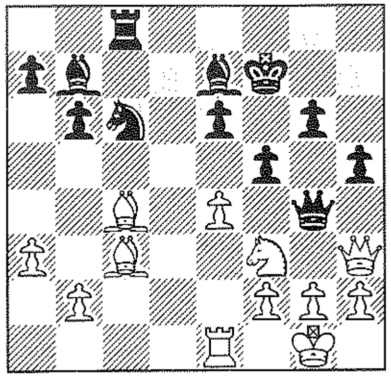
24...♕f4 (not missing an opportunity to activate the queen) **25 ♖e1!**

It is probable that 25 ♖d7 was also good, but there is no longer any need for this.

25...♕g4

After this some simple tactics prove decisive. 25...♗f6 was more tenacious, requiring White to calculate some more complicated variations. I don't know how Petrosian would have played after this, but the 'human+machine' combination easily finds the pretty 26 ♗xe6+! ♔xe6 27 exf5+ ♔f7 28 fxg6+ ♔xg6 29 ♗xf6 ♔xf6 30 ♕d7 ♘d8 31 ♕e7+ ♔g6 32 ♘e5+ ♔h6 33 ♕d6+ ♔g7 34 ♕g6+ ♔h8 35 ♘d3. For similar reasons 25...♖d8 would also have lost, although here too White would have had to make several accurate moves: 26 exf5! ♕xc4 27 fxg6+ ♔xg6 (or 27...♔e8 28 g7 e5 29 ♕g3 ♔d7 30 ♖d1+ ♗d6 31 ♗xe5) 28 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 29 ♕f5+ ♔e8 30 ♕xh5+ ♔f8 (30...♔d7 31 ♖xc6) 31 ♕g6! ♖d1+ 32 ♘e1 ♘d4 33 ♕h6+ ♔e8 34 ♕h5+ ♔f8 35 ♕h8+ ♔f7 36 ♕h7+ ♔xe6 37 ♕g8+.

Now it all ends more quickly. It is probable that by now Smyslov was repulsed by the sight of his position.



26 exf5! ♕xc4 27 fxg6+ ♔e8 (after 27...♔xg6 28 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 29 ♖xc6! the white knight makes a highly effective fork at e5) **28 g7** (the remainder is of no interest) **28...e5** (28...♔d7 29 ♖d1+ ♗d6 30 ♕g3 ♘d4 31 ♘e5+) **29 ♕xh5+ ♔d7 30 ♖d1+ ♗d6 31 ♗xe5 ♘d4 32 ♘xd4 1-0**

So, prophylaxis – this is the way that Petrosian solved opening problems. It is noteworthy that the above games were played before he won the title of world champion, that is in his years of greatest activity, when his creative credo was revealed most vividly. He always aimed to place his pieces ideally, do everything to restrict his opponent's possibilities, and at the appropriate moment exploit the superior placing of his army. And he succeeded in this, even in battles with the most outstanding players of his time!

After his victory in that USSR Championship Petrosian also performed successfully in the Interzonal tournament (Stockholm, January-March 1962), sharing second place with Geller, behind Fischer. 'He played with only one aim – to finish in the first six. This task proved well within the powers of the talented grandmaster. He, like Fischer, went through the tournament undefeated. "If Petrosian played more boldly, he would be the strongest player in the world," Fischer said to me. Indeed, sometimes Petrosian suddenly forgets about caution, and then he is terrible to behold. One can only hope that in Stockholm he was completely "sitting on the fence" and that on Curaçao he will be a genuine chess "tiger".' (Kotov)

I don't know about a 'tiger', but in the marathon Candidates tournament on the island of Curaçao (May-June 1962) he again went through without a single defeat, took first place and finally qualified for a match with Botvinnik.

How to overcome Botvinnik?

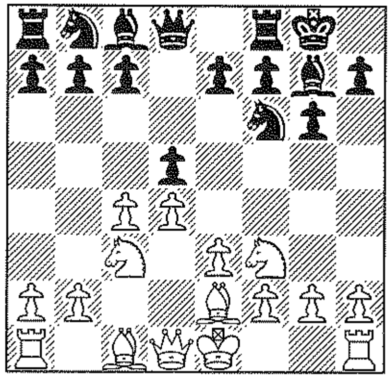
Tigran Petrosian's skill in exploiting long-term positional factors is well known, but for many, even quite strong players, the very concept 'long-term positional factor' sounds vague – for them it is something non-concrete, without any precise mathematical basis.

Of course, everyone knows about concepts such as pawn structure or the weakness of certain squares, but their significance is often hard to evaluate. And in our age of dynamic chess it can happen that no attention is paid to them at all, although it is quite obvious that one should value both a good pawn structure, and the possibility of exploiting weak squares. But the most difficult, I think, even for a very strong player, is the ability to correlate all these long-term factors with the concrete dynamics of the position. Say, in the Chelyabinsk Variation (1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 ♘d5) Black has a yawning hole at d5 plus a weakened pawn structure, but in compensation he has a mass of dynamic factors – how to correlate one with the other? How to understand which is more important? It is here that many players run into problems.

Petrosian was perhaps one of the first who learned not simply to exploit long-term factors, but also to subtly correlate them with the dynamic features of the position. He as though sensed where and when the opponent's initiative would in the end evaporate, whereas the flaws of his adversary's position would remain. One of the most characteristic examples is the famous 5th game of his match with Mikhail Botvinnik (Moscow, spring 1963). As Petrosian himself writes, it was especially memorable for him: it was his first win over Botvinnik in official events (the start of the match had gone in favour of the champion: +1=3), and in addition he managed to win, so to speak, from level ground.

Game 15
T.Petrosian-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1963, 5th game
Grünfeld Defence D94

1 c4 g6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♗e2



It is interesting that Petrosian should employ such a quiet, modest variation against the Grünfeld Defence, in which Black has more than one way to equalise. Botvinnik chose the most direct.

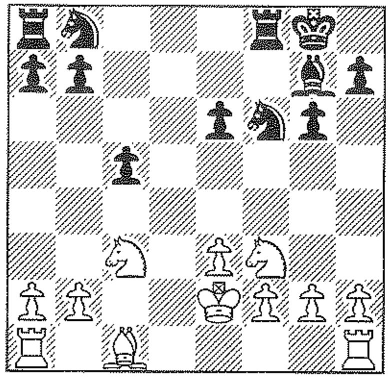
6...dxc4

The challenger had also reckoned on the main theoretical reply of that time – 6...e6 7 0-0 b6 8 cxd5 exd5 9 b3 ♗b7 10 ♗b2 ♘bd7 11 ♕c2 a6 12 ♖ac1 ♖c8 13 ♖fd1 ♕e7 14 ♕b1?! ♖fd8 15 ♗f1 c5 with an excellent game for Black (Sokolsky-Botvinnik, Leningrad 1938), having prepared the improvement 9 b4! with the possible sequel 9...c6 10 a4 ♖e8 11 ♗a3 (Simagin-Osmanagic, Sarajevo 1963).

7 ♗xc4 c5 8 d5 e6

Well of course! 'If Black had wanted to obtain a complicated position, he could have played 7...♘fd7, transposing into Smyslov's interpretation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, or else 8...♘e8 followed by ...♘d6. But in that period of the match Botvinnik happily went in for simplification, especially when he was playing Black.' (Petrosian)

9 dxe6 ♕xd1+ 10 ♔xd1 ♗xe6 11 ♗xe6 fxe6 12 ♔e2



As Petrosian admitted, during his preparations for the game he was not concerned about the prospect of this ending arising.

'The most impatient of the press centre habitués began to get ready to go home. But the resulting endgame is very complicated. White's pawns create a more favourable impression, thanks mainly to the isolated black pawn at e6. Of course, it is hard to imagine that White will ever be able to create a serious threat of winning it. But the fundamental defect of an isolated pawn is not just that it may become a target, but equally that the square or squares in front of it may become strong points for the opponent's pieces. One of the white knights will occupy an ideal position at e4.' (Petrosian)

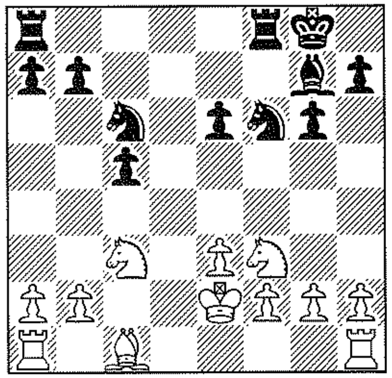
12...♘c6

The most natural move: Black assumes that rapid development and piece activity will more than compensate for the weakness of his e6-pawn. 12...♘d5 13 ♘e4 (or 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 ♖d1 ♖d8 15 ♘g5 ♘a6 with equality)

13...♘a6!? (the match bulletin) or 13...♘d7 was recommended, 'although even in this case 14 ♖d1 ♖ad8 15 ♘fg5 leaves White with a slight initiative.' (Petrosian) However, I think that after 15...♘c7 16 ♘d6 ♘b8! 17 ♘ge4 b6 18 ♖b1 ♘c6 19 ♗d2 ♘d5 20 ♘c4 ♖d7 and ...♖fd8 Black has no particular problems.

Rather than the game continuation, I also prefer 12...h6!? Of course, it is hard to decide on such a non-developing, purely prophylactic move, preventing the knight sortie to g5 (in fact this is an illusory loss of tempo: after ♘g5 Black must all the same spend time on ...♖e8, since after ...e6-e5 the light squares are conclusively weakened and the g7-bishop becomes 'bad'). For example: 13 ♘d2 ♘d5 (13...♘c6!?) 14 ♘de4 ♘d7 (14...♘a6!?; 14...b6!? 15 ♖d1 ♖d8 and ...♘c6) 15 ♖d1 ♘xc3+ 16 ♘xc3 ♘e5 or 13 ♘e5 g5! 14 ♖d1 ♘d5! 15 ♘xd5 ♗xe5 16 f4 exd5 17 fxe5 ♖d8 with double-edged play.

In short, after 12...h6!? Black maintains the dynamic balance without difficulty. But it is probable that Botvinnik did not even consider such a move. Why should he? As it is, Black has a normal, solid position. It is out of such micro-inaccuracies that a defeat is sometimes composed.



13 ♖d1 (a small plus would have been retained by 13 ♘g5!? ♖fe8 14 ♖d1, when it was possible to play 14...h6 15 ♘ge4 ♘xe4 16 ♘xe4 b6 17 ♖b1 ♖ad8 18 ♗d2 ♖d5 19 ♗c3 ♖ed8 etc.) **13...♖ad8**

A simpler alternative was 13...♔f7!? (Flohr, Petrosian) or, as before, 13...h6!?, preventing the key manoeuvre ♘g5-e4.

14 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 15 ♘g5! (aiming, with gain of tempo, for the cherished e4-square)

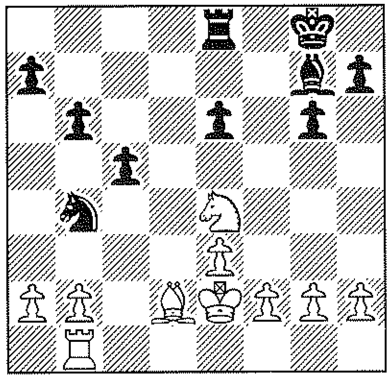
15...♖e8

It transpires that the seizure of the d-file was illusory (15...e5? 16 ♘e6 is bad).

16 ♘ge4 ♘xe4

'Preferable was 16...b6 17 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♘e4 ♗g7(e7).' (Petrosian) I agree with this, but in any case it is already apparent that Black's dynamics have evaporated. However, the most probable outcome of the game still remains a draw: the game cannot be won with only the one weakness at e6 and the good knight at e4.

17 ♘xe4 b6 18 ♖b1 (unhurried preparation for ♗d2 – it transpires that Black's pressure on the long diagonal is also illusory) **18...♘b4!? 19 ♗d2!**



19...♘d5

'It is clear that the variation 19...♘xa2 20 ♖a1 ♘b4 21 ♗xb4 cxb4 22 ♖xa7 ♗xb2 23 ♖b7 would suit White: the opponent would be condemned to a prolonged defence.' (Petrosian)

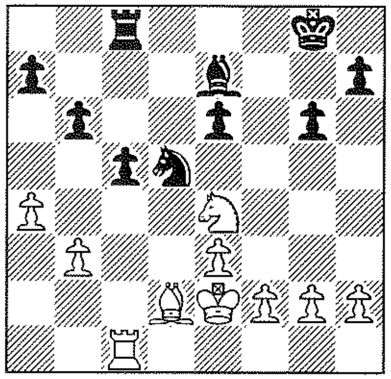
20 a4 ♖c8 (after 20...♘f6!? 21 ♘d6 ♖d8 22 ♘c4 White's chances are also slightly better) **21 b3 ♗f8**

Creating a tactical threat to relieve the situation by 22...c4 23 ♖c1 cxb3! 24 ♖xc8 b2 25 ♖c1 bxc1♕ 26 ♗xc1 a6 with equality.

22 ♖c1 ♗e7

'The commentators unanimously condemned this move. But later Black could have achieved approximate equality, whereas after 22...♖c7 23 ♘g5 it would be not so easy for him to defend.' (Petrosian) For example: 23...♖e7 24 e4!? h6!? 25 ♘h3 ♘f6 26 f3 with the idea of ♘f2-d3 and b3-b4 (Speelman) or 25 ♘f3 ♘f6 26 ♖c4 ♘d7 27 b4.

It was more interesting to play 22...a6!? (Tal), in order after 23 b4 c4 24 b5 axb5 25 axb5 to create counterplay on the a-file and against the b5-pawn.



Black has nevertheless played his bishop to e7, but the similar position after 16...b6!? (with the knight at c6 and the possibility of ...e6-e5 and ...♔f7-e6) would have been better for him. That is, step by step he gives way and little by little his problems increase. And yet the player with Black was not some average master, but the great Botvinnik, and this was not the Moscow Championship, but a match for the world crown. The position is so complicated that finding the correct set-up at the board proved difficult even for the world champion!

23 b4!

A committing, but undoubtedly correct plan of creating a second weakness on the c-file. Petrosian decided on it only after great hesitation.

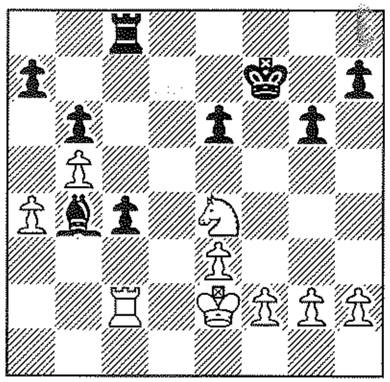
23...c4

The advance of the c-pawn would appear to give Black counterplay, but this cuts both ways: on the one hand the pawn is passed, but on the other hand it is weak. If 23...♔f7 the following line seemed convincing enough to Petrosian: 24 bxc5 bxc5 25 ♔d3 ♘b6 26 a5 c4+ 27 ♔d4 ♖d8+?! 28 ♔c3 ♖d3+ 29 ♔c2 ♘d5 30 ♖b1 (I would add 30 ♔d1!), although after 27...♘a4! 28 ♖c2 (but not 28 ♖xc4? ♖d8+ 29 ♔e5 ♘b2 Speelman) 28...h6 29 ♖a2 ♘c5 30 ♘xc5 ♗xc5+ Black gains a draw. Whereas in the event of 24 ♖c4! h6 25 bxc5 bxc5 26 a5 he would indeed have faced a tedious defence.

24 b5 ♔f7

It is probable that Botvinnik underestimated the following clever play by White against the c-pawn. Serious consideration should have been given to 24...♗a3!? (many commentators thought that 24...c3? was also acceptable, overlooking 25 ♘xc3! ♗a3 26 ♘xd5, winning) 25 ♖c2 c3! (Averbakh) 26 ♗xc3 ♖c4 (if 26...♗b4?! 27 ♔d2 ♖c4 28 ♗xb4 ♖xe4 29 ♗d6 ♖xa4 Petrosian was intending 30 f3!) 27 ♔d3 ♖xa4, for example: 28 ♖a2 ♖xe4 29 ♖xa3 ♘xc3 30 ♔xc3 ♖e5 31 ♖xa7 ♖xb5 (Petrosian) 32 ♖b7 ♖c5+ 33 ♔d3 b5, 28 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 29 ♗xf6 ♔f7 30 ♗d4 ♗d6!, or 28 ♗d2 ♗e7!, and although in each case White has a minimal advantage, Black would have retained good drawing chances.

25 ♗c3! ♗a3 26 ♖c2 ♘xc3+ (if 26...♔e7, then 27 ♗e5! and ♘d2) **27 ♖xc3 ♗b4 28 ♖c2**



28...♔e7?

Probably the decisive mistake. It was also hopeless to play 28...♗e7?! 29 ♘d2 c3 30 ♘e4 ♖c4 31 ♘xc3 ♖b4 32 ♔d3 h6 (P-H.Nielsen; 32...♗f6? 33 ♘e4! ♖xa4 34 ♖c7+ ♗e7 35 ♘g5+) 33 ♖a2 ♖b3 (33...♗f6 34 ♘e4!) 34 ♔c2 ♖b4 35 ♘e2 with chances of converting the extra pawn. The only defence now was 28...e5! 29 ♘d2 c3 30 ♘e4 ♔e6, for example:

1) 31 f3 h6?! 32 ♔d3 ♖d8+ 33 ♔c4 ♖d2 34 ♔b3 ♖xc2 35 ♔xc2 ♔d5 36 ♔d3! c2 37 ♔xc2 ♔c4 38 ♘d2+! ♗xd2 39 ♔xd2 ♔b4 40 ♔d3 ♔xa4 41 ♔c4 and wins (Tal), e.g. 41...h5!? (Speelman) 42 h4! ♔a5 43 e4! a6 44 bxa6 b5+ 45 ♔d5 ♔xa6 46 ♔xe5 etc. (Dvoretsky), but 'by retaining all the pieces Black can resist' (Petrosian): 31...♗a5! 32 ♔d3 ♖d8+ 33 ♔c4 ♖d2 34 ♔b3 ♖d3 35 ♖e2 ♖d1 with a draw.

2) 31 ♔d3 ♖d8+ 32 ♔c4 ♖d2 33 ♔b3 ♖xc2 (not 33...♔d5? 34 ♘xc3+ ♗xc3 35 ♔xc3 ♖xc2+ 36 ♔xc2 ♔c4 37 f3 ♔b4 38 ♔d3 ♔xa4 39 ♔c4 and wins, as in variation 1) 34 ♔xc2 ♔d5 35 ♘f6+ ♔c4 36 ♘xh7 ♗e7! 37 f4 exf4 38 exf4 ♔b4 39 g4 ♔xa4 40 ♔xc3 ♔xb5 41 f5 gxf5 42 gxf5 ♔c5 43 f6 ♗xf6+ 44 ♘xf6 ♔d6 with a draw, or 35 ♘xc3+ ♔c4 36 ♘e4 ♗e7 with sufficient compensation for the pawn (Speelman). Indeed, after 37 g4 ♔b4 38 ♔d3 (38 ♘c3 ♔c4) 38...♔xa4 39 ♔c4 ♔a5 (39...g5!? Dvoretsky) 40 f4 exf4 41 exf4 a6 42 bxa6 ♔xa6 43 f5 gxf5 44 gxf5 b5+ 45 ♔b3 ♔b6 46 f6 ♗f8 47 ♘g5 h6 48 ♘h7 ♗d6 49 f7 ♔c6 50 f8♕ ♗xf8 51 ♘xf8 ♔d5, or 45 ♔d3 ♔b6 46 f6 ♗a3 47 f7 ♔c6 48 ♘g5 h6 (not 48...♔d5? 49 ♘xh7 ♔e6 50 f8♕ ♗xf8 51 ♘xf8+ ♔f5 52 ♘d7 ♔g4 53 ♘e5+ ♔h3 54 ♘f3 and wins) 49 ♘h7 Black gains a draw:

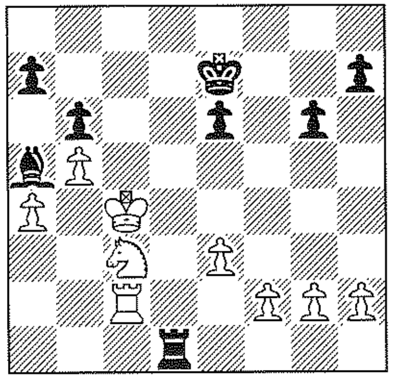
a) 49...♔d5 50 f8♕ ♗xf8 51 ♘xf8 b4! (it is essential to advance the pawn to b3: 51...♔e5? 52 ♘d7+ ♔f4 53 ♔e2 b4 54 ♘c5 ♔g4 55 ♔f2 and wins) 52 ♘d7 b3 53 ♘f6+ (or 53 ♘b6+ ♔e5 54 ♔e3 ♔f5 55 ♘c4 ♔g4 56 ♔f2 ♔f4 with a draw) 53...♔e6 54 ♘g4 h5 55 ♘e3 ♔e5 56 ♘c4+ ♔f4 57 ♔e2 ♔g4 58 ♔f2 ♔f4 59 h3 ♔f5 60 ♔e3 ♔g5 61 ♔f3 ♔f5 62 h4 ♔e6 63 ♔e4 ♔f6 64 ♔f4 ♔e6 65 ♔g5 ♔d5 66 ♘d2 b2 with a draw;

b) 49...♔d7!? (this is simpler) 50 f8♕ ♗xf8 51 ♘xf8+ ♔e7 52 ♘g6+ ♔f6 53 ♘h4 b4 54 ♘f3 b3 55 ♔c3 ♔f5 or 53 ♘f4 ♔f5 54 ♘e2 ♔g4 55 ♘g1 b4 56 ♔c4 ♔f4 57 ♔xb4 ♔e3 with a draw.

29 ♘d2! c3

Alas, the c-pawn cannot be saved: 29...♗xd2 30 ♔xd2 ♔d6?! 31 ♔c3 ♔c5 32 ♖d2 or 30...♖d8+ 31 ♔c3 ♖d1 32 ♔xc4, although, in Petrosian's opinion, this rook endgame would have given Black the opportunity for a tenacious defence.

30 ♘e4 ♗a5 31 ♔d3 ♖d8+ 32 ♔c4 ♖d1 (32...♖d2 33 ♔b3!) **33 ♘xc3**

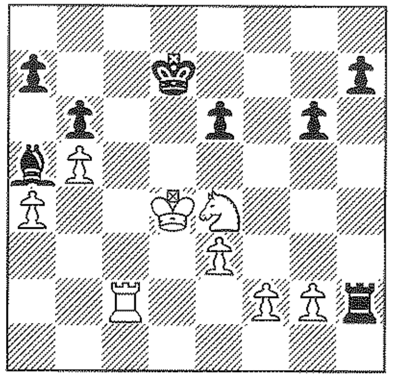


33...♖h1?

The last chance was 33...♗xc3!, which is what Petrosian feared, since 'the rook endgame, although apparently so unpromising, would offer Black his best saving hopes.'

True, after 34 ♔xc3 it is dubious to play both 34...♖h1 35 h3 ♔d7 (a recommendation of the match bulletin) 36 ♔d4! ♖a1 37 ♔e5 ♖xa4 38 ♔f6 etc., and 34...♔f6 35 ♖d2! ♖a1 36 ♖d7 ♖xa4 37 ♖xh7 ♖a2 38 ♖h3! ♖xf2 39 ♖f3+ ♖xf3 40 gxf3 with a won pawn ending. However, a more tenacious attempt is 34...g5!? (Teschner), and the winning path is still rather thorny.

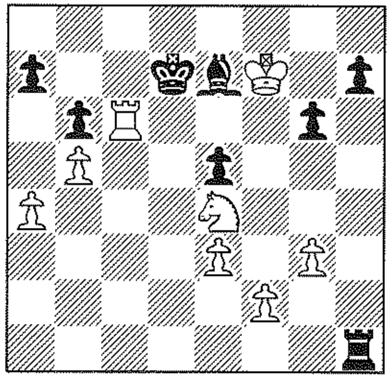
34 ♘e4! (Bronstein called this 'a courageous decision') **34...♖xh2 35 ♔d4!** (by returning the pawn, White has achieved total domination: ♖c7+ is threatened) **35...♔d7**



36 g3

36 g4 h5 37 ♔e5! hxg4 38 ♘f6+ ♔e7 39 ♘xg4 ♖h5+ 40 ♔e4 (Petrosian) was also decisive, but in time-trouble the challenger played as safely as possible and comfortably converted his advantage into a win.

36...♗b4 37 ♔e5 ♖h5+ 38 ♔f6 ♗e7+ 39 ♔g7 e5 40 ♖c6! ♖h1 41 ♔f7!



The sealed move. The adjournment session, which took place the following day, did not last long.

41...♖a1 (41...♖h5 42 a5!) **42 ♖e6 ♗d8** (42...♗b4(c5) 43 ♖xe5) **43 ♖d6+ ♔c8 44 ♔e8! ♗c7 45 ♖c6 ♖d1** (or 45...♖xa4 46 ♘g5 with the amusing variation 46...♔b7 47 ♘e6 ♗b8 48 ♘d8+ ♔a8 49 ♖c8! and ♘c6 Petrosian) **46 ♘g5 ♖d8+ 47 ♔f7 ♖d7+ 48 ♔g8 1-0**

In my opinion, this is a very significant example. After all, the quality of the games we study should always be judged in conjunction with the strength of the players (it seems to me that this is often ignored). Just think: such a 'simple' win over the world champion! How hard it was to weigh up those long-term factors in the position, if even Botvinnik thought beforehand that he would gain a draw without any problems.

The subsequent battle in the match was very difficult. By also winning the 7th game, Petrosian took the lead, but then the initiative passed to Botvinnik. Although the opinion that Botvinnik exerted strong pressure seems to me to be an exaggeration. Nevertheless, in the 14th game (*Volume 2, Game No.71*) by strength of will, so to speak, he broke Petrosian's highly tenacious resistance and levelled the scores. Many observers must then have believed that the deciding role would now be played by Botvinnik's colossal match experience and competitive character (although a careful analysis shows that he did not have any substantial chances in this match).

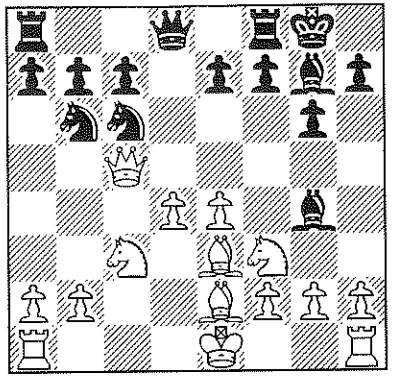
The turning point proved to be the 15th game. I think it was the fact that Petrosian immediately took the lead again that finished off Botvinnik. After that win, Botvinnik could hardly have expected that in the very next game he would not simply be defeated, but outplayed in every respect in a complicated struggle.

Game 16
T.Petrosian-M.Botvinnik
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1963, 15th game
Grünfeld Defence D98

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♕b3

On this occasion, in contrast to the 5th game, this is one of the most double-edged and at that time little-studied variations, introduced by Botvinnik himself in a game with Levenfish (8th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1933). In the depths of his soul he was probably pleased at such a turn of events, but he soon encountered unpleasant problems.

4...dxc4 5 ♕xc4 ♗g7 6 e4 0-0 7 ♗e2 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 ♘d7 9 ♗e3 ♘b6 10 ♕c5 (10 ♕d3 f5!?) **10...♗g4**



11 d5!?

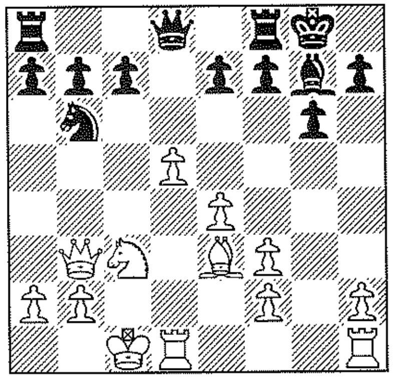
11 ♖d1 would have transposed into a position from the sensational game Botvinnik-Fischer (Varna Olympiad 1962), which continued 11...♕d6! (*Volume 2, Game No.77*).

11...♘d7 12 ♕a3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♘d4 14 0-0-0 ♘xf3

Many suggested 14...c5 15 dxc6 ♘xc6, but after 16 ♔b1 ♕c8 17 ♗e2 White remains with the two bishops and an active plan with f2-f4 and e4-e5. 'Botvinnik likes more secure positions.' (Konstantinopolsky)

15 gxf3 ♘b6 (if 15...c6, then 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 h4! ♖e8 18 h5 ♕c7 19 f4 or 17...h5 18 f4)

16 ♕b3



16...♕d7?!

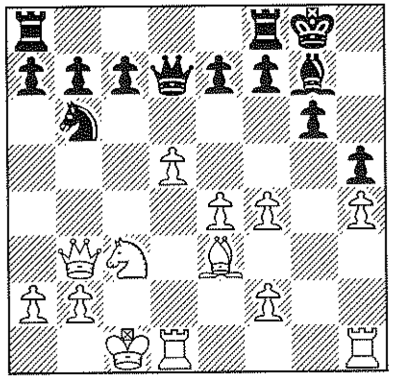
16...♕c8 was more flexible, with the idea of 17 h4 c6! (an 'X-ray' on the c-file) 18 d6 (18 h5 cxd5, or 18 ♔b1 ♗xc3! and ...cxd5, in each case with equality) 18...exd6 19 ♖xd6, and here not 19...♕c7?! (Konstantinopolsky) 20 ♖d2 (20 ♗f4? ♘c8!, but not 20...♗h6? 21 ♖xg6+! hxg6 22 ♗xh6 ♖fe8 23 h5 with an attack) 20...♖ad8 21 h5, or 20...h5 21 ♖g1! ♔h7 22 ♖gd1 with the initiative for White, but 19...♗e5! 20 ♖d3 ♕e6 with equality (21 f4?! ♗xc3!).

17 h4! (not so much even an attack, as an attempt to force a weakness) **17...h5**

The attempt succeeded! White has the advantage after 17...c6 18 h5 cxd5 (18...♗xc3!?) 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 ♗xb6! axb6 21 ♘xd5 (Konstantinopolsky) 21...♕e6 22 ♔b1 ♖fd8 23 ♕b4 ♔f8 24 a3! ♕d6 25 ♕xb6 e6 26 ♕xd6+ ♖xd6 27 ♘e3 with chances of converting his extra pawn.

18 f4

With the obvious intention of continuing f4-f5.



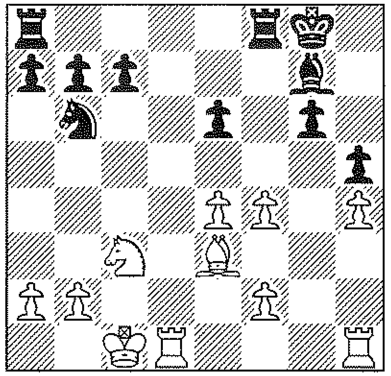
18...e6?!

It is strange that the commentators did not mention the other natural undermining move – 18...c6! The immediate 19 f5 is parried by the bold 19...♗xc3! (Black only needs to defend his g6-pawn, and for this the bishop is not necessary) 20 ♕xc3 (20 bxc3 cxd5 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 exd5 ♖ac8 23 ♖hg1 ♔h7 is weaker) 20...cxd5 21 ♔b1 ♕a4 (21...♖ac8 22 ♕b3) 22

♖d4 ♕c6 without counterplay.

19 ♖hg1! is more venomous, for example: 19...cxd5 (19...♗xc3? 20 ♖xg6+!! ♔h7 21 ♖g5 ♗g7 22 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♖g1+ ♔h7 24 ♕d1 and wins) 20 ♗xb6! axb6! (20...♗xc3?! 21 ♖xd5 ♕c6 22 ♖xg6+! ♕xg6 23 ♖g5) 21 ♘xd5 ♕e6 22 ♖de1, or 19...♔h7 20 f5 cxd5! (20...♗xc3? 21 ♕xc3! cxd5 22 ♕e5! and wins) 21 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♕c6+ 23 ♕c2 with a minimal, fading advantage.

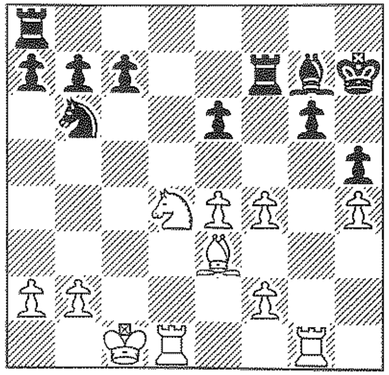
19 dxe6 ♕xe6 20 ♕xe6 fxe6



In the resulting endgame Black's pawn structure is roughly the same as in the 5th game examined earlier. However, here it is more difficult to assess the situation, since White's pawns are also spoiled – his advantage does not look so definite. But it is this that comprises the skill of a player, to accurately weigh up which of the weaknesses is more important! Black's weaknesses at e6 and g6 are highly perceptible, and yet for the moment it is not altogether clear whether they really can be exploited.

21 ♖hg1 ♔h7 (21...♗xc3 is no longer so good: after 22 bxc3 ♔h7 23 ♖g5 Black's position is unenviable) **22 ♘b5! ♖f7 23 ♘d4**

A familiar motif: Petrosian has devised the important manoeuvre of his knight via f3 to g5, in passing, incidentally, again attacking the weak e6-pawn. If 23 b3, then 23...♗h6! (latching on to the f4-pawn) 24 ♔b1 ♖e8 with equality (but not 24...♗xf4?! 25 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 26 ♘xc7).



23...♖e8?

Effectively the decisive mistake. 23...♗xd4 24 ♖xd4 ♖af8! was more tenacious (24...♖e8, as recommended in the match bulletin, is weaker on account of 25 ♖g5! ♖d7?! 26 f5!).

Another interesting idea is the attempt to gain counterplay, not previously mentioned by anyone – 23...♘c4!? 24 ♘xe6! (24 b3 ♘xe3 25 fxe3 ♗xd4! 26 ♖xd4 e5!; 24 e5 ♖e8! 25 ♘f3 ♗h6 26 ♖g3 ♘b6!) 24...♗xb2+ 25 ♔c2 ♗f6 26 ♗d4! (26 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 27 ♖xg5 ♖e8 28 f5 ♘xe3 29 fxe3 gxf5 30 ♖xh5+ ♔g7 promises little) 26...♖e8 (26...♗xh4? 27 f5! gxf5 28 ♖h1 ♖e8 29 ♘f4 c5 30 ♗c3 and wins) 27 ♗xf6 ♖xe6 (27...♖xf6?! 28 ♖d7+ ♔h8 29 ♘g5 ♖xf4? 30 ♘f7+) 28 e5, when White nevertheless retains the initiative:

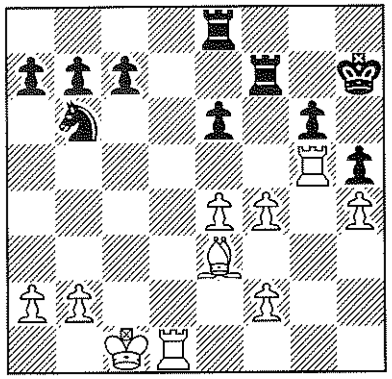
1) 28...♖exf6?! (28...c5? 29 f5! gxf5 30 ♖d8 is also unsuitable) 29 exf6 ♖xf6 30 ♖d7+ ♔h6 31 ♖xc7 ♖xf4 32 ♖xb7 ♖xf2+ 33 ♔d3;

2) 28...♖c6?! 29 ♔b3 ♘a5+ 30 ♔b4 b6 (or 30...♖a6 31 f5 gxf5 32 ♖g5 ♔h6 33 ♖xf5 ♘c6+ 34 ♔b3) 31 ♔b5 ♖c5+ 32 ♔a6 ♘c6 33 ♔b7 ♖c2 34 ♖ge1;

3) 28...♖e8! 29 ♖g3! (if 29 ♖g5 Black is saved by 29...♘d6! 30 ♖dg1 ♘e4 or 30 exd6 ♖xf6 31 ♖e5 ♖d8 32 ♖e7+ ♔g8! 33 ♖xc7 ♖fxd6 with a draw) 29...♘d6!? 30 ♖e3! ♘f5 31 ♖ed3 ♔g8 (31...♘d6? 32 exd6 ♖xf6 33 dxc7) 32 ♖d7 ♖c8 (not 32...♘d6? 33 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 34 exd6! ♔xf6 35 dxc7 ♖c8 36 ♖d7 ♔e6 37 ♖g7 ♔f6 38 ♖h7) 33 ♔b3 etc.

Nevertheless, this would have been better for Black than the game continuation. It is rather symptomatic: Botvinnik again proved psychologically unprepared for a lengthy, painstaking defence of a slightly inferior ending. For him, a man of action, it was extremely hard to play such passive and 'dull', technical positions.

24 ♘f3! ♗h6 25 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 (alas, this is forced) **26 ♖xg5**



A familiar structure has arisen (cf. the note to Botvinnik's 21st move), but here Black has not even managed to give his opponent a weakness at c3, and his position is strategically lost.

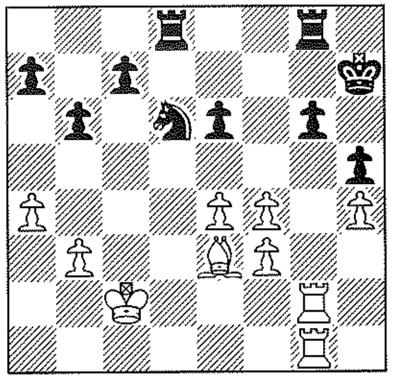
26...♘c4? (too late!) **27 ♖dg1?**

This is such a natural move, that both players missed the sudden 27 f5!! (Konstantinopolsky) 27...exf5 28 exf5 ♖xf5 (28...gxf5 29 ♖dg1!) 29 ♖d7+ ♔h8 30 ♗d4+ ♘e5 31 ♖xf5 gxf5 32 f4 and Black is crushed. But I think that Petrosian would have found such a tactical idea, if he had considered it necessary to find it.

27...♖g8 28 ♔c2! b6 (Konstantinopolsky's idea 28...♘d6 29 f3 a6 followed by ...♖d7 and a possible ...♘f7 is hardly much better) **29 b3 ♘d6** (29...♘xe3+ 30 fxe3 would merely have supported the f4-pawn) **30 f3 ♖d7 31 ♖5g2 ♖dd8 32 a4!**

It is interesting to see how Petrosian consistently strengthens his position. For a start he wants also to give Black a weakness on the queenside. After all, White still has a bishop against a knight – an additional plus when there is play on both flanks, and besides, his agile rooks will be able to attack the vulnerable black pawns.

It is no less interesting to see what a computer would do in the given position: here one observes the different playing styles of the various programs! The 2000 version of Hiarcs and the more modern Junior found 32 a4! quite quickly, whereas Fritz persistently recommended playing the rooks to the d-file.



32...♘f7 33 ♗c1! e5

Rightly fearing 34 ♗b2! and f4-f5, Black gets rid of his weak e6-pawn, although this is 'not to the taste' of the machine. Within a few seconds it produces the reply:

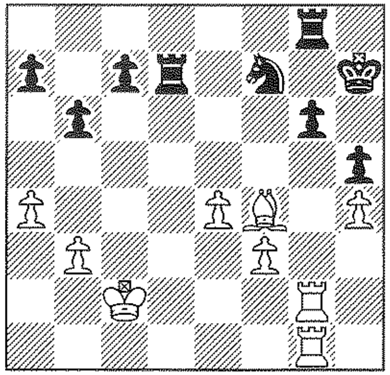
34 ♗e3!

'Iron Tigran' plays with truly iron logic! But the computer shows how much progress has been made by... computers! Previously such a bishop pendulum would have been beyond their powers! Fritz also analyses 34 ♖g3.

34...exf4

According to Konstantinopolsky, 34...c5 was more tenacious. This is also the opinion of Junior, although this does not change the overall picture (say, after 35 a5). One of the versions of Fritz suggests 34...a5, when there can follow 35 ♖d2 (35 ♖g3!?) 35...♖xd2+ 36 ♔xd2 ♖d8+ 37 ♔e2 with the threat of ♖c1-c6 (while after ...c7-c5 the weakness of Black's queenside is ruinous).

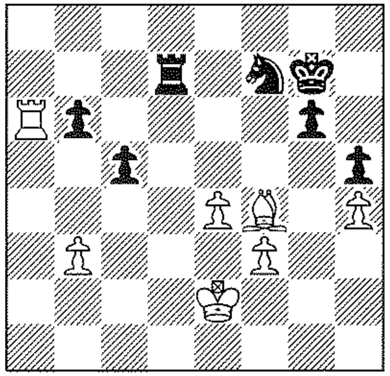
35 ♗xf4 ♖d7



36 ♖d2!

An important move, and again in synchrony with the machine! The exchange of a pair of rooks is useful: now it is easier to create the desired additional weakness on the queenside.

36...♖xd2+ 37 ♔xd2 ♖d8+ 38 ♔e2 c5 39 a5! (an accurate continuation of the plan) **39...♖d7 40 axb6 axb6 41 ♖a1 ♔g7 42 ♖a6!**



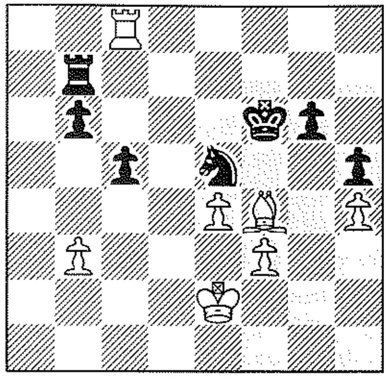
The sealed move, and also a 'machine' move, forcing the black rook to occupy a passive position. One has to admire, of course, the progress of computer technique, but even more so Petrosian's mathematical accuracy. It is this logic which can now be explained to a computer: that is, all the moves so fit into a common plan, that they are understandable even to the machine. On the resumption there followed:

42...♖b7 (42...b5? 43 ♖c6) **43 ♖a8 ♔f6**

'The attempt 43...b5 44 ♖c8 c4 would not have saved Black in view of 45 b4! with the threat of e4-e5.' (Konstantinopolsky) Or simply 45 bxc4 bxc4 (45...b4 46 ♗c1!) 46 ♖xc4 etc.

44 ♖c8 (Hiarcs suggests a dual solution – 44 ♖f8, and Fritz – 44 ♖g8, but the key idea is the same here, and the evaluations are identical) **44...♘e5**

Or 44...♖e7 45 ♖b8 ♖e6 46 ♗c7 and wins. And here a distinction appears between the great player and a machine... from the last century.



45 ♔e3!

Without thinking! For a human it is obvious that if White goes chasing a pawn by 45 ♗xe5+ ♔xe5 46 ♖c6? (46 ♔e3!), Black gains counterplay – 46...♔d4! etc. But an old version of Hiarcs spent a long time struggling with this problem: variations with gain of material were the most difficult test for computers of the 1990s, and only an analysis of hundreds of thousands of variations gradually brought 45 ♔e3! into first place. Need it be said that the modern Junior and Fritz solve this little problem instantly!

45...♘d7 46 ♖c6+ ♔f7 47 e5! (only Hiarcs insisted on 47 ♗c7) **47...♘f8 48 ♖f6+ ♔g7 49 ♔e4 b5 50 ♖c6 ♔f7** (or 50...c4 51 bxc4 bxc4 52 e6) **51 ♖xc5**

After winning a pawn, Petrosian easily converts his advantage into a win.

51...♘e6 52 ♖d5 ♔e7 53 ♗e3 ♖b8 54 ♖d6 b4 55 ♖a6 ♖b5 56 ♖a7+ ♔e8 57 f4 ♔f8 58 f5 1-0

After then winning the 18th and 19th games, Petrosian won the match by a score of 12½-9½ and became the 9th world champion in the history of chess.

Botvinnik admitted that he had been unable to adapt to his opponent's surprising, cautious and highly technical style. 'Petrosian possesses a distinctive chess talent,' he wrote later. 'Like Tal, he does not aim to play "by position", as it was understood earlier. But whereas Tal aimed to obtain dynamic positions, Petrosian created positions where events developed as though in a slow-motion film. It is hard to get at his pieces: the attacking pieces advance slowly and they get stuck in the bog that surrounds the camp of Petrosian's pieces. If you finally succeed in creating a dangerous attack, you either have little time left, or fatigue sets in.'

To the delight of the new chess king and all the contenders to the throne, from this cycle onwards FIDE abolished return matches. 'I consider this decision to be correct and fair,' Petrosian declared at a press conference after the match. 'After all, the challenger is produced as the result of an objective qualification process. Why after defeating the champion should an additional examination be arranged? If the challenger were to be produced without qualification, then the champion's right to a return match would have to be retained.' How very true!

The Challenger's Mistake

After three years of peaceful rule, Tigran Vartanovich faced another difficult test – a match for the crown with the young and very dangerous challenger Boris Spassky (Moscow, April-June 1966). For a long time players were of the opinion that Petrosian played uncertainly in positions that were rich in tactical resources. And Spassky based his match strategy on this: with either colour he aimed to create complicated, double-edged situations, hoping that here he would be able to outwit his opponent. But the first half of the match quickly demonstrated convincingly to the challenger that he was wrong.

After six draws, in the 7th game Spassky decided to employ an idea, which has nowadays become standard in matches for the world crown: he played one of the opponent's favourite openings – as Petrosian put it, 'in the hope that, in fighting against his own weapon, he would fight not only against real dangers, but also against non-existent ones.' Alas, this plan suffered a complete fiasco.

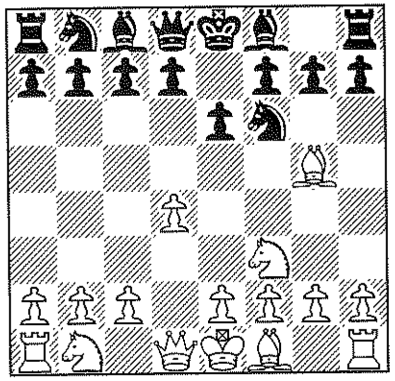
Game 17

B.Spassky-T.Petrosian

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1966, 7th game
Torre Attack D03

1 d4 (for the first and last time in the match, the challenger avoided 1 e4) **1...♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♗g5!?**

A surprise! As Bronstein wittily commented: 'Boris invited Tigran to play in the yard of the house where the latter grew up.' In any event, this way of avoiding the quiet Queen's Indian Defence is not so harmless for Black.

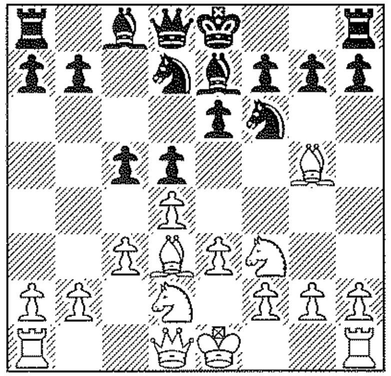


3...d5

If 3...c5 4 e3, then 4...b6?! is weak on account of 5 d5!, as in the games Petrosian-Kozma (Munich Olympiad 1958) and, surprisingly, Yusupov-Karpov (4th matchgame, London 1989). Also quite good for White is 4...♘c6 5 ♘bd2 b6 6 c3 ♗e7 7 ♗d3 0-0 8 0-0 (Petrosian-Taimanov, Leningrad 1960), while if 4...♕b6!? he usually sacrifices a pawn – 5 ♘bd2 ♕xb2 6 ♗xf6! (not 6 ♗d3 d5 7 c4 ♕c3! Spassky-Miles, Tilburg 1978) 6...gxf6 7 ♗e2 with sharp play precisely in the style of Spassky!

However, it is useful to include 3...h6!, as played long ago by Nimzowitsch (*Volume 1, Game No.93*), Alekhine, Botvinnik and later Karpov. The retreat 4 ♗h4 expands Black's possibilities, while after 4 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 he has a solid position: the two bishops compensate for White's spatial advantage. Karpov defended in this way against Korchnoi after a different move order – 3...b6 4 e4 h6 (Hastings 1971/72) or 2 ♗g5 e6 3 e4 h6 (19th matchgame, Moscow 1974), and even despite these two failures he continued to employ this flexible plan.

4 ♘bd2 ♗e7 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 c5 7 c3

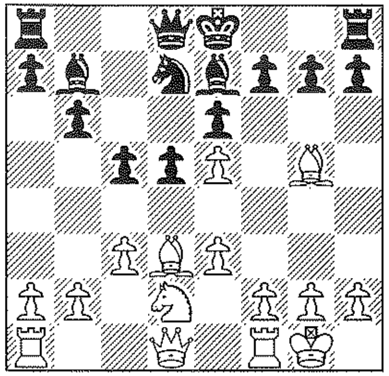


7...b6

The alternative is 7...♕c7, whereas 7...0-0?! is inaccurate on account of 8 ♘e5! ♘xe5 9 dxe5 ♘d7 10 ♗f4! f5 (10...f6 11 ♕h5!) 11 h4! c4 12 ♗c2 with an attack: 12...b5 (12...♘c5!? Petrosian-Bannik, Tbilisi 1951) 13 ♘f3 ♘c5 (13...b4 14 ♘g5!) 14 g4 b4 15 gxf5 (15 ♘d4!? Petrosian) 15...exf5 16 ♘g5 g6? (16...h6!) 17 h5! ♘d3+? 18 ♗xd3 cxd3 19 hxg6 (19 ♘xh7!) 19...hxg6 (19...♗xg5 20 ♖xh7) 20 ♕xd3 bxc3 21 bxc3 ♗xg5 22 ♗xg5 ♕a5 23 ♗f6 ♖e8 24 ♕d4 ♔f7 25 e6+! ♖xe6 26 ♗d8! 1-0 (Petrosian-Lyublinsky, 17th USSR Championship, Moscow 1949).

Therefore Petrosian is not in a hurry to castle kingside. Such play based on nuances, the ability to determine the priority in the development of the pieces – it is this that constitutes chess aerobatics!

8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♘e5 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♘d7



11 ♗f4?!

'Following a well-known course. But there is a very big "but": Black has not yet castled, and this denies White the opportunity to use the e5-pawn as an active weapon – on the contrary, it becomes a target,' writes Petrosian. 'More sensible was 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 f4, giving up any ambitious plans.'

This is what White must play! After this Black largely chooses between 12...0-0-0 followed by ...f7-f6 (Garcia Pedron-Korchnoi, Las Palmas 1981) and the slow 12...f6 13 exf6 gxf6 14 e4 0-0-0 (Spassky-A.Sokolov, Bugojno 1986) or 13 ♕h5+ ♕f7 14 ♕e2 0-0! (I.Sokolov-Ivanchuk, Biel 1989).

11...♕c7!

'More vigorous is 11...g5 12 ♗g3 h5, forcing 13 h3, when Black's position is highly attractive.' (Petrosian) True, but 13 f4! h4 (Klaric-Geller, Sochi 1977) 14 ♗f2 is less clear.

12 ♘f3 (not 12 ♕g4? g5! 13 ♗xg5 ♖g8 14 h4 h6 or 13 ♗g3 h5 and wins; 12 ♕h5!? Crouch)

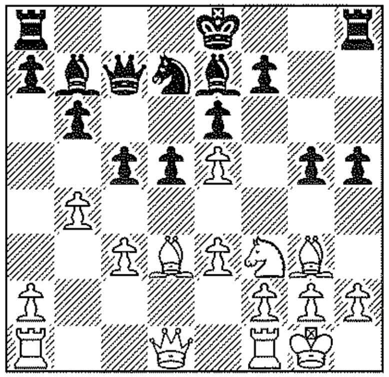
12...h6! 13 b4!?

White is already forced to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative. Incidentally, this was the actual game continuation, rather than 13 ♗g3 g5 14 b4, as given in the first volume of *Informator* and in Colin Crouch's book *How to Defend in Chess* (2000).

13...g5!

Black also launches an attack, avoiding 13...cxb4?! 14 cxb4 ♗xb4 in view of 15 ♘d4!, and 'for the moment Black's extra pawn does not play any serious role, whereas White's attacking chances, involving ♕g4(h5), ♖c1, ♗g3 and f2-f4-f5, are more than real.' (Petrosian) Here Spassky would indeed have been in his element!

14 ♗g3 h5



15 h4

'After the natural 15 h3, in view of the inevitable, sooner or later, ...g5-g4 White would again have been unable to hold his e5-pawn.' (Petrosian) Also possible is the immediate 15...g4 16 hxg4 hxg4 17 ♘h2 ♘xe5 18 ♗b5+ (18 ♘xg4 ♗d6 19 bxc5 bxc5 20 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♕a4+ ♔f8! is no better) 18...♔f8 19 ♘xg4 ♗d6 20 f4 ♘xg4 (20...♘c4!? Suetin) 21 ♕xg4 f5! and ...♕f7 with advantage to Black.

Instead of 17 ♘h2 Tal suggested a bold piece sacrifice – 17 ♘d4?! cxd4 18 cxd4. As Suetin put it, 'in a match for the world championship such an extreme decision would not by any means occur to everyone.' And indeed, after 18...♗xb4 19 ♖c1 (19 ♕xg4 ♗a3!) 19...♕d8 20 ♕xg4 ♖c8 21 ♕g7 ♖f8 22 ♗f4 ♘b8!? and ...♔d7 Black can repel the attack and remain with a decisive material advantage.

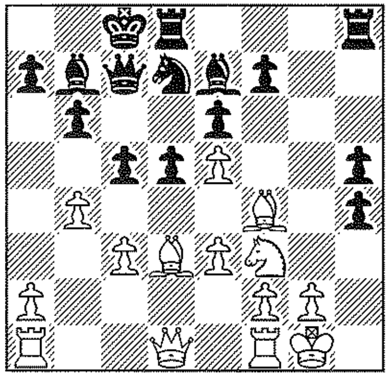
15...gxh4!

Opening the g-file. After 15...g4 Petrosian did not like 16 ♘g5 ♘xe5 17 ♗b5+, but in addition White also has counterplay after 16 ♘d2 ♘xe5 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 ♗b5+ ♔f8 19 e4 (Suetin).

16 ♗f4 (but not 16 ♘xh4? c4 17 ♗c2 ♗xh4 18 ♗xh4 ♕xe5) **16...0-0-0**

'Black fearlessly castles into the fire of the enemy batteries, rightly assuming that his attack on the kingside will prove more rapid and dangerous.' (Tal)

An interesting alternative is 16...h3 17 gxh3 (17 g3? h4!) 17...0-0-0 18 a4 (18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♕a4? d4!) 18...f6!? 19 exf6 ♗d6 (Crouch) with the initiative for Black, for example: 20 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 21 a5 c4 22 axb6 axb6! 23 ♗c2 ♘xf6 24 ♕d4 ♖dg8+ 25 ♔h1 ♘g4! and wins.

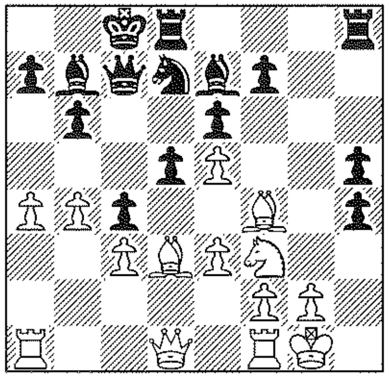


17 a4?

The general opinion was that 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 ♖b1 was necessary, but Petrosian would have been unlikely to agree to the opening of play on the queenside and would almost certainly have replied 17...♘xc5!, since Black's attack on the g-file is far more serious than White's occupation of the d4-square. For example: 18 ♘d4 (18 ♗e2?! ♖dg8 19 ♔h2 ♖g7, ...♖hg8 and ...♘e4) 18...♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♕c4!, then ...♖h(d)g8 etc.

17...c4!

A procedure which has become standard. Black blocks the queenside, by which he nips the opponent's initiative in the bud and secures the safety of his king, freeing his hands for play on the g-file (and in some cases also for ...♗f8-g7, winning the e5-pawn). Petrosian once again subtly realised that White's possession of the d4-square would not give him anything. The ability to weigh up such factors of different scale is precisely what distinguishes great players.

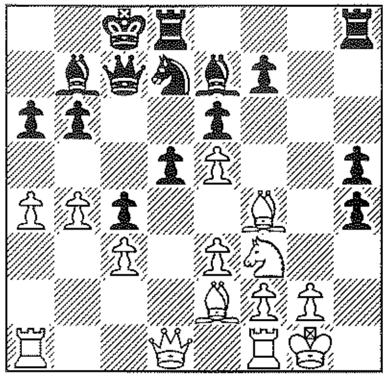


18 ♗e2

This leads to an unusual impasse, but the tactical stroke 18 ♗f5!?, recommended by many commentators, would also not have helped. 'If Black swallows the bait – 18...exf5 19 e6 ♗d6 20 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 21 exd7+ ♖xd7, he is already two pawns up, but after 22 ♘d4! White's chances are in any event no worse *(this is questionable in view of 22...h3! 23 gxh3 f4; 22 ♘xh4 and ♕d4 is apparently more tenacious – G.K.)*. It is curious that Spassky saw 18 ♗f5 and he pointed it out immediately after the game. But he decided against playing his bishop to h3 (if Black avoided taking on f5), where it would have been not very aesthetically placed, resembling some kind of strange, large pawn. However, at h3 the bishop would have fulfilled the important function of defending the g2-pawn.' (Petrosian)

But things would not have come to this, had Black replied 18...d4! 19 cxd4 (19 ♘xd4 ♘xe5!? 20 ♗h3 a6) 19...exf5 20 e6 ♗d6 (20...♕c6 21 exd7+ ♖xd7 22 b5 ♕d5 is also not bad) 21 exd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 when 'Black dominates the position' (Crouch), for example: 23 ♘xh4 ♖g8! 24 ♕xh5 (24 ♖c1 ♖g4! 25 ♖xc4+? ♔d8 26 ♘f3 ♕d5 or 25 ♘f3 ♕g6! and wins) 24...♕c6! 25 f3 ♕f6! or 25 d5 ♕xd5 26 f3 ♕e5 etc.

18...a6!

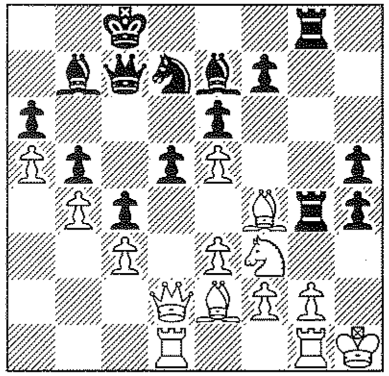


The point of Black's idea. After this move the opponent is unable to create an attack, and the play is now all one way.

19 ♔h1 ♖dg8 20 ♖g1 ♖g4 21 ♕d2

White also has a pitiful position after 21 ♘h2 (Suetin) 21...♖g6 22 ♘f3 ♖hg8 followed by ...♕d8-f8-g7 and the threat of ...h4-h3.

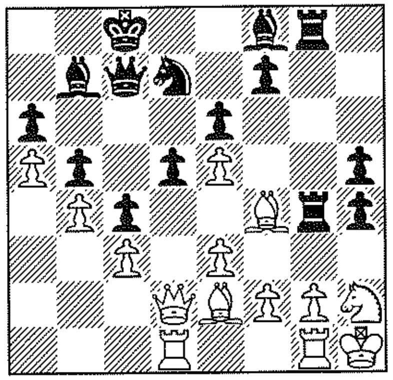
21...♖hg8 22 a5 b5 23 ♖ad1



23...♗f8!?

Hinting at the plan 24...f6 25 exf6 e5. 'The challenger's position has become too alarming, and he decides on an extreme measure – to accept the exchange sacrifice, although it is well known that Petrosian never sacrifices anything against anyone in vain.' (Tal)

24 ♘h2



24...♘xe5! 25 ♘xg4 hxg4 26 e4 (an attempt to at least somehow activate the rook) **26...♗d6** (26...dxe4?? 27 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 28 ♕d8 mate) **27 ♕e3 ♘d7!?**

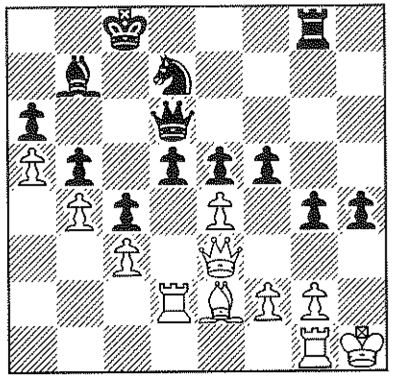
'Played in Petrosian's style: before launching the decisive attack, Black strengthens his centre.' (Averbakh) 'A paradoxical manoeuvre. 27...g3 or 27...dxe4 suggests itself. Even so, Petrosian's decision is more original and in practice more unpleasant for the opponent. Black believes in the strength of his position.' (Suetin)

Although, in principle, Black would also have won by both 27...g3 28 fxg3 (28 f3 ♘g4!) 28...hxg3 29 ♖gf1 f5! 30 exf5 (after Crouch's move 30 ♗xg3, 30...♕g7 is decisive) 30...♕h7+ 31 ♗h6 ♖h8, and 27...dxe4 28 ♖xd6!? (desperation: 28 ♕d4 ♗d5! and ...g4-g3) 28...♕xd6 29 ♖d1 ♕c7 30 ♕d4 f6 31 ♗xe5 fxe5 etc.

28 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 29 ♖d4?!

'This merely adds fuel to the fire. 29 ♖d2 was more tenacious, when Black would have developed his initiative by 29...f5.' (Suetin) But in my opinion, 29...♕e5! is stronger here. 29 f4 was indeed more tenacious, after which 29...f5 30 e5 ♕f8 31 ♔h2 ♕h6 or 29...e5!? is good.

29...e5! 30 ♖d2 (it is also hopeless to play 30 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 31 ♖d1 ♘f6 32 exd5 ♔b8 Suetin) **30...f5!**



An uncommonly picturesque position: Black has an exemplary Philidor phalanx! 'Euwe once remarked that Petrosian is a great master of pawn play. The present game is a good example of this and a splendid illustration of the ideas of the great Philidor.' (Averbakh) Here pawns truly are the soul of chess...

'I don't know whether telepathy exists, but that evening the match participants were like artists, performing at the request of the spectators.' (Tal)

31 exd5

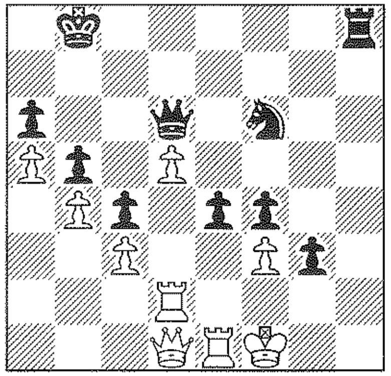
Petrosian considered 31 exf5 ♘f6 32 ♕h6? to be 'slightly better', overlooking 32...♘e4! 33 ♕xd6? ♘xf2+ 34 ♔h2 g3 mate (Crouch), while if 32 f3, then 32...♘h5 33 fxg4 ♘g3+ 34 ♔h2 d4! (Tal) 35 cxd4 e4! 36 ♔h3 ♘xf5 and White's position collapses. However, 31...♕f6! would also have won.

31...f4! 32 ♕e4 (after 32 ♕a7 the reply 32...e4 was recommended, but a stronger idea is 32...g3! 33 ♖gd1 h3! or 33 f3 ♖h8) **32...♘f6 33 ♕f5+ ♔b8 34 f3** (not 34 ♕e6 ♕xe6 35 dxe6 ♘e4! with the threat of 36...♘xf2+ and 37...g3 mate) **34...♗c8 35 ♕b1 g3 36 ♖e1 h3 37 ♗f1**

Or 37 gxh3 g2+ 38 ♔g1 ♕d7!

37...♖h8 38 gxh3 ♗xh3 39 ♔g1 (39 ♗xh3 ♕d7!) **39...♗xf1 40 ♔xf1** (40 ♖xf1 ♕d7! followed by ...♕h3 or ...♕a7+) **40...e4!** (the final breakthrough: 41 fxe4 f3!) **41 ♕d1**

Here the game was adjourned and Black sealed his next move.



41...♘g4!?

A human decision instead of the machine-like 41...♕d7! or 41...♕e5. It is surprising that, with such an abundance of winning moves available to his opponent, Spassky did not resign without resuming.

42 fxg4 f3 43 ♖g2

'An ill-fated rook,' Tigran Vartanovich sympathised. 'It did not in fact bring any benefit to its army, and now in desperation it sacrifices itself, without saving anything.'

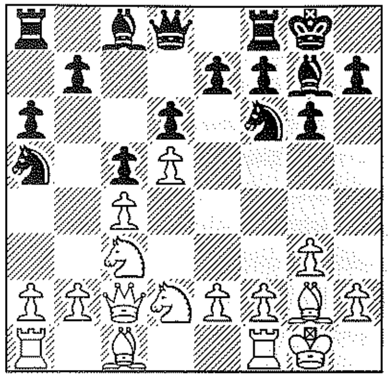
43...fxg2+ (or 43...♖h1+ 44 ♖g1 ♕h6 with mate in seven moves), and in view of 44 ♔e2(xg2) ♕f4 White resigned.

'One of my best games. It demonstrates my creative views – the utmost restriction of the opponent's possibilities, strategy over the entire board, the surrounding of the enemy king and the gradual tightening of the encirclement around it.' (Petrosian)

A warning signal for the challenger! However, as though nothing had happened, Spassky continued to draw his opponent into complicated, dynamic positions with a wealth of unusual tactics. And I think it was only the lessons of the 10th and 12th games that helped him finally to draw up the correct match strategy (however, there was no longer enough time for perestroika, and he succeeded in solving the 'Petrosian riddle' only in the 1969 match).

Game 18
T.Petrosian-B.Spassky
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1966, 10th game
King's Indian Defence E66

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 0-0 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 d4 a6 8 d5 ♘a5 9 ♘d2 c5 10 ♕c2



10...e5!?

Nowadays the traditional 10...♖b8 is fashionable again. At that time this variation was only just gaining in popularity, which reached its peak in the late eighties to early nineties (although one often sees a knight at a5 even now). Its theory has now advanced very far – to the 20th-25th move, and Black's tactical possibilities usually compensate for the ugly position of his knight on the edge of the board. But at that time 10...e5 was considered the most critical move: after blocking the centre, Black begins preparing ...f7-f5 and ...b7-b5.

11 b3 (11 a3!? and 12 b4 is more active)

11...♘g4 12 e4

'Since on the queenside White is sticking to defensive tactics, he must seek counterplay on the kingside.' (Boleslavsky)

12...f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♘d1!?

'Objectively the cautious 14 ♗b2 seems

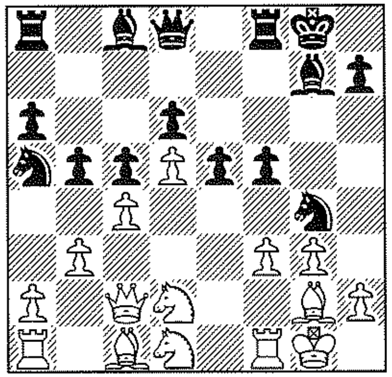
better *(followed by ♖ae1 and ♘d1 – G.K.)*. But Petrosian's idea is very interesting and is distinguished both by its strategic depth, and by its far-sighted psychological intention of drawing the enemy fire.' (Suetin)

14...b5

'Unsuitable is 14...e4 15 ♗b2 ♗d4? 16 ♗xd4 cxd4 17 b4, when White wins a piece.' (Suetin) But after 15...♗xb2 16 ♕xb2 b5 Black has an acceptable game, for example: 17 f3 e3 18 ♘b1 ♘e5 19 ♘xe3 f4 etc.

15 f3!?

Although Black has managed to play both ...f7-f5 and ...b7-b5, White is relying on the fact that he will nevertheless have a definite advantage on account of the bad knight at a5, and he makes a double-edged move. 'In the same provocative manner. From the standpoint of restricting the opponent's counterplay, 15 ♗b2 was better,' state Suetin and Vasyukov, while Boleslavsky adds that 'after the possible sequel 15...♖b8 16 f3 ♘f6 17 ♗c3 ♗h6 18 ♖e1 it is not easy for Black to find an active plan.'



The critical position. If 15...♘h6 16 ♗b2, then 16...f4?! 17 g4 is to White's advantage – he gains the e4-square for a knight and the second knight will support it from f2. His position is the more active, although the fact that it is half-open leaves Black with counterchances. But Spassky basically wanted to open up the game as soon as possible and provoke a crisis, so that the following move is fully in accordance with his match strategy:

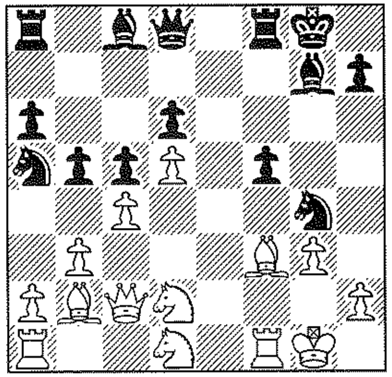
15...e4?!

'Both during the game and immediately afterwards, it seemed that this thrust was natural and strong. It would appear that White's seemingly passive play should allow Black to take the most vigorous measures, disregarding any weakening of his position. But the question is: is not Black's initiative illusory? The course of the game shows that it is far harder to breach White's position than it might seem. And it is this that demonstrates the world champion's great far-sightedness.' (Suetin)

16 ♗b2

Of course, not 16 fxg4? ♗xa1 17 gxf5 ♗d4+ 18 ♔h1 ♗xf5 and White does not have sufficient compensation for the exchange.

16...exf3 17 ♗xf3

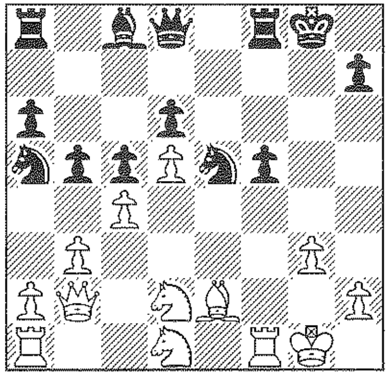


17...♗xb2

In the opinion of both Suetin and Burgess, 17...♘e5 was better, retaining the g7-bishop for the defence of the king against attacks on the g-file (after ...f5-f4 and gxf4). However, this does not change the character of the play, for example: 18 ♗g2 ♕g5 19 ♘f2 f4 20 gxf4! ♕xf4 21 ♘fe4 ♕e3+ 22 ♔h1 with advantage to White: 22...♗h3? 23 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 24 ♖g1! or 22...♗f5 23 ♖ae1 ♕h6 24 ♘f3 and, after the exchange of a pair of minor pieces, the remoteness of the a5-knight begins to play a decisive role. Therefore Spassky hurries with his counterplay, hoping for ...f5-f4 and ...♖a7-g7.

18 ♕xb2 ♘e5 19 ♗e2

Now Black is practically forced to go in for extreme measures: if he remains with the weak f5-pawn and White manoeuvres his knight via e3 and g2 to f4, the game will be strategically decided.



19...f4?

It was on this that Spassky was pinning his hopes: the game is opened up, the possibility of ...♗h3 is created, and Black, exploiting his strong knight at e5 and the remoteness of the white queen from the kingside, creates threats to the enemy king. And for the moment the offside knight at a5 would appear not to be felt, in contrast to the variation 19...♗d7?! 20 ♘e3 ♕g5 21 ♘g2 ♖ae8 22 ♖ae1, where the pressure on the c4-pawn is ephemeral, whereas the holes in Black's position are yawning.

'It is hard to refrain from such a thrust, especially as Black's plan was apparently determined back on the 15th move. Even so, it would have been more in the spirit of the position to build up the pressure with 19...♖a7 20 ♘e3 *(20 cxb5 axb5 21 ♗xb5 ♖g7 22 ♔h1 ♗b7 or 22 ♘f3 ♘g6!? and ...f5-f4 – G.K.)* 20...♕f6 21 ♕c2 ♖g7 22 ♘g2 *(22 cxb5 axb5 23 ♗xb5 f4 24 ♔h1 ♕h6! – G.K.)* 22...♘g6, and the threat of ...f5-f4 becomes much stronger. Tal gives the variation 23 ♔h1 f4 24 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 25 gxf4 ♗h3 with good counterplay.' (Suetin)

However, after 21 ♔h1! (instead of 21 ♕c2) 21...♖e7 (21...bxc4 22 bxc4!) 22 ♖ae1 and ♘g2 it is hard for Black to play ...f5-f4 and he continues to suffer with his knight on a5. As is also the case after 20...♖g7 (Suetin) 21 ♘g2 bxc4 22 bxc4 ♘g6 23 ♔h1!

This was why Spassky played 19...f4 immediately. This move would have been logical and good, had it not been for... a tactical refutation.

20 gxf4?

An error in reply, which, however, is also excusable: to make the correct choice between the two captures on f4 is hard even for the most inveterate tactician! Moreover, the champion is planning his favourite exchange sacrifice – in the words of Suetin, 'he deliberately plays on the psychology of his opponent and sets him a very subtle trap.'

Petrosian himself later admitted: 'I would attribute this move to the influence of Tal – to the various psychological tricks that are fashionable nowadays. At that point of the match, my opponent's approach to the solving of practical problems was already clear to me, and I was ready to bet that in reply Spassky would make the energetic and showy move 20...♗h3. Although I realised that objectively 20 ♖xf4 was stronger.'

I absolutely agree with this – after 20...♖xf4 21 gxf4 things would not have been easy for Black:

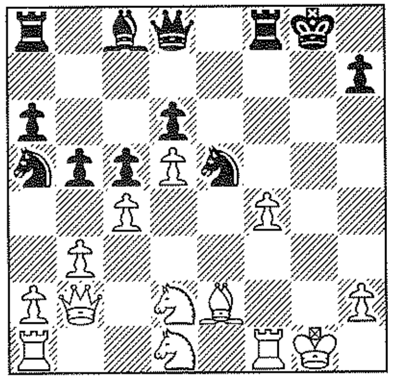
1) 21...♖a7? 22 fxe5! (Tal recommended 22 ♘e3 ♖g7+? 23 ♔h1 ♗h3? 24 fxe5 ♕g5 25 ♘g4! ♗xg4 26 ♘e4 and wins, but 22...♘g6! is more tenacious) 22...♖g7+ 23 ♔f1! (but not 23 ♔f2? ♕h4+ 24 ♔e3 ♕g5+ 25 ♔d3 ♗f5+ 26 ♘e4 ♕f4 27 ♘dc3 ♕xe5 28 ♗f3 bxc4+ 29 bxc4 ♕d4+ 30 ♔e2 ♕xc4+ with perpetual check) 23...♗h3+ 24 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 25 ♘f1 ♕h4+ 26 ♘f2 and White wins;

2) 21...♘g6 22 ♘e4 ♘xf4 (22...bxc4? 23 ♘f6+ ♔f7 24 ♘h5) 23 ♘df2 (Suetin's recommendation 23 ♘e3 ♖a7 24 ♘f6+ ♔f7 25 ♖f1 ♕xf6 26 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 27 ♖xf4+ 'with clearly the better ending for White' is dubious on account of 27...♔e5! 28 ♖f8 ♔d4 29 ♔f2

bxc4 30 bxc4 ♖e7 with equality) 23...♖a7.

According to Boleslavsky, here 'Black has a good game', but this is not so: 24 ♔h1! ♖g7 (24...bxc4? 25 ♖g1+ ♘g6 26 ♘f6+ and ♘2e4) 25 ♗g4!! bxc4 26 ♗xc8 (26 ♖g1!?) 26...♕xc8 27 ♘f6+ ♔f8 (if 27...♔f7 the 'X-ray' through the three knights is decisive – 28 ♖f1!! and ♘2e4) 28 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 29 ♘f6+ ♔f8 30 ♖e1 ♕f5 31 ♖e8+ ♔f7 32 ♘2e4 ♘b7 33 bxc4 ♘h5 34 ♖e7+! ♔f8! (34...♔xe7 35 ♕xb7+ ♔d8 36 ♕b6+ ♖c7 37 ♕xd6+ ♔c8 38 ♕f8+ ♔b7 39 ♘xd6+ and ♘xf5) 35 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 36 ♔g1, or here 35...♘xf6 36 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6 37 ♘xf6 ♔xg7 38 ♘e4 ♔g6 39 ♔g2 ♔f5 40 ♔f3 ♘a5 41 ♘d2 and White wins.

There is nothing surprising in this: after all, Black is effectively a piece down! Incidentally, I also had some dismal experiences with an offside knight at a5 in my youth: in 1976 I lost in this way to Nikolayevsky, in 1977 to Zaid, and in Tilburg 1981 – also to Timman, after which I gave up playing the variation with ...♘c6.



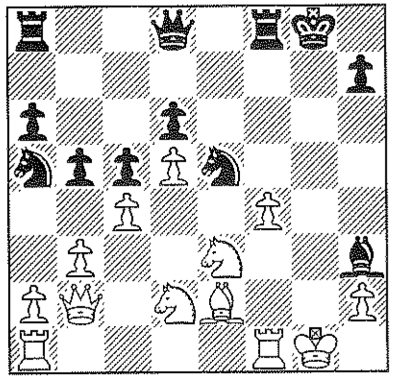
20...♗h3?!

'Here it is, the psychological crisis. Almost without thinking, Black is tempted by the planned sortie of his liberated bishop, forgetting for an instant about concrete calculations. But without them, in such a situation general considerations are quite useless! Correct was 20...♖xf4! 21 ♘e3 (21 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ 22 ♔h1 ♕xf4) 21...♕g5+ 22 ♔h1 ♖xf1+ 23 ♘dxf1 ♗h3 and Black's chances are not worse.' (Suetin) Although White would have remained the active side: 24 ♕c3 ♕f4 25 ♘g3 ♕f2 26 ♗f1 ♕f3+ 27 ♔g1 b4 28 ♕e1 ♗xf1 29 ♘exf1 ♕f6 30 ♘d2 (30 ♘e4 ♘f3+ 31 ♔h1 ♕d4 32 ♕g3+ ♔h8 33 ♕xf3 ♕xa1 34 ♘xd6 ♕g7! is unclear) 30...♘d3 31 ♕e6+ ♕xe6 32 dxe6 ♖e8 33 ♘de4 ♖xe6 34 ♖d1 ♘f4 35 ♘xd6 ♘e2+, gaining a draw.

Instead of 23...♗h3 Boleslavsky and Vasyukov recommended 23...♖a7 – in their opinion, here White would altogether have faced 'a difficult defence' and 'a struggle for a draw,' but in my view it is Black who is more at risk after 24 ♕d2 ♖g7 25 ♘g3 – once again on account of the ill-starred knight at a5. If 25...♘b7 White should play 26 ♖f1 (but not 26 cxb5 axb5 27 ♗xb5?! on account of 27...♘f3 28 ♕f2 ♘xh2!) and Black's initiative gradually evaporates.

21 ♘e3!

The first exchange sacrifice! There was no choice: 21 ♖f2? ♖xf4 22 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ etc. 'Suddenly the picture changes sharply.' (Boleslavsky)



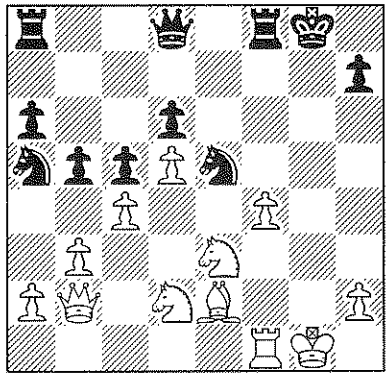
21...♗xf1?

Having begun something, one wants to continue in the same way. Especially since with the knight at e3 the tactical stroke 21...♖xf4 22 ♖xf4 ♕g5+ is parried by 23 ♖g4! (23 ♔h1 ♕xf4 24 ♖g1+ ♔h8 25 ♖g3 ♗d7 is not so clear) 23...♘xg4 24 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 25 ♗xg4 ♕xg4+ 26 ♔h1 'and the initiative unexpectedly passes to White.' (Suetin) After the forced 26...♕d4! 27 ♖g1+ ♔h8 (27...♔f7? 28 ♕c2) 28 ♕xd4+ cxd4 29 ♖g4 Black has a very difficult endgame in Boleslavsky's opinion, although here I have managed to find a way to draw: 29...bxc4 30 bxc4 ♖e8! 31 ♖xd4 ♖e1+ 32 ♔g2 ♖d1! 33 ♔f3 ♘xc4 34 ♖xc4 ♖xd2.

Evidently it is stronger to play 29 ♘e4! ♘b7 30 cxb5! (30 ♖d1 bxc4 31 bxc4 ♖f8 32 ♘g5 h6 33 ♘e6 ♖f2 34 a3 ♖f3 35 ♖xd4 ♖xa3 36 ♖h4 ♔h7 37 ♖g4 ♖b3 allows more drawing chances) 30...axb5 31 ♖d1 ♖xa2 32 ♖xd4 with the threat of ♖b4!, and if 32...♘c5, then 33 ♘xd6 ♘xb3 34 ♖d3 ♘c5 35 ♖c3! ♘a4 36 ♖g3 etc., although the limited material leaves Black with hopes of saving the game.

In any case this was a more tenacious continuation than that which occurred in the game. But Spassky was not yet even thinking about defence! Alas, very soon the bitter realisation set in.

22 ♖xf1

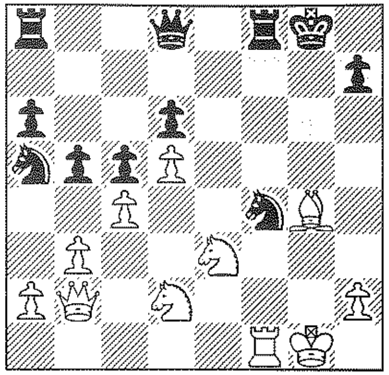


22...♘g6

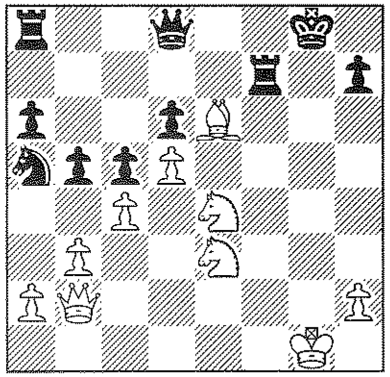
After 22...♘d7 (recommended by many commentators) 23 ♗g4! (23 cxb5!?) 23...♘f6 24 ♗e6+ (Suetin) 24...♔h8 25 ♘e4 White also has a very strong initiative, while if 23...♕f6 'with possibilities of a resistance' (Boleslavsky), then 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 25 ♕c1! (Burgess) 25...♕d4 (25...♘b6 or 25...♖ad8 – 26 ♔h1!) 26 ♘f3! ♕g7+ 27 ♔h1 ♘f6 28 ♘f5 ♕c7 29 ♖g1 etc.

23 ♗g4! (23 ♘g4? h5!) **23...♘xf4?!**

Confusion – quite probably, from a feeling of hopelessness: it was bad to try 23...♖xf4? 24 ♗e6+ ♔f8 25 ♖xf4+ ♘xf4 26 ♕h8+ ♔e7 27 ♘f5 mate, as was the more tenacious 23...♕f6 24 ♗e6+ ♔h8 25 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 26 f5 (Boleslavsky) 26...♘e5 27 ♘e4!, or 23...h6 (Suetin) 24 ♗e6+ ♔h7 25 ♘f5 ♖a7 26 ♘e4!



24 ♖xf4! (the second exchange sacrifice!) **24...♖xf4 25 ♗e6+ ♖f7** (25...♔f8 26 ♕h8+ ♔e7 27 ♕xh7+) **26 ♘e4**



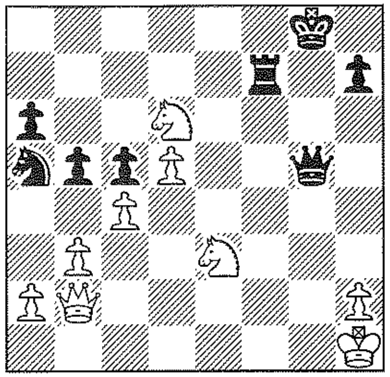
'A picturesque position. Black is helpless, despite the fact that he is two exchanges to the good. The knight at a5 is a passive witness to the destruction of its army.' (Boleslavsky)

26...♕h4 (or 26...♖a7 27 ♘f5 ♕f8 28 ♕f6! Boleslavsky) **27 ♘xd6 ♕g5+**

It is no better to play 27...♕e1+ 28 ♔g2 ♕xe3 29 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♘f5+ ♔xf7 (31...♔d7 32 ♗e6+) 32 ♕g7+ and ♘xe3 (Boleslavsky), or 27...♖a7 28 ♘ef5 ♕g4+ 29 ♔f2 bxc4 (29...♕h4+ 30 ♔f1 ♕f4+ 31 ♔e1)

30 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 31 ♕h8+! ♔xh8 32 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 33 ♘7h6+ and ♘xg4.

28 ♔h1 ♖aa7 (or 28...♕xe3 29 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♘f5+ ♔xf7 32 ♕g7+ and ♘xe3 Suetin) **29 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7**



30 ♕h8+!! 1-0

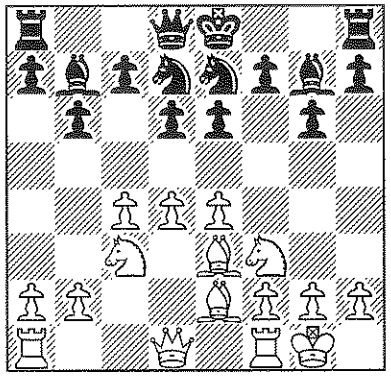
A spectacular concluding blow. Black resigned in view of 30...♔xh8 31 ♘xf7+ and ♘xg5. The seconds of the two players, grandmasters Boleslavsky and Bondarevsky, called this game the best of the match.

The champion had warmed up! Petrosian was leading by two points, and the 12th game could already have essentially been decisive, had he managed to take his wonderful combination to its logical end.

Game 19
T.Petrosian-B.Spassky
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1966, 12th game
Modern Defence A42

1 ♘f3 g6 2 c4 ♗g7 3 d4 d6 4 ♘c3 ♘d7 5 e4 e6!? 6 ♗e2 b6 7 0-0 ♗b7 8 ♗e3 ♘e7

A rare, 'sideline' defence, which bears the name of the Czech master Ujtelky. 'It seems to me that such an opening liberty in a match for the world championship contributes as much to the progress of chess as playing the most topical variation according to classic patterns.' (Petrosian)



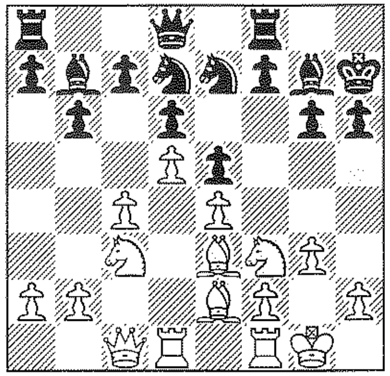
9 ♕c2 h6 10 ♖ad1 0-0

From the viewpoint of the modern player, Black's development is rather strange: nowadays this is mainly how they play against a computer. But in this match Spassky several times employed different variations of the double fianchetto, trying to take Petrosian away from theory and transfer the weight of the struggle to a complicated middlegame. He thought that, even if Black's position were objectively worse, he would be able to outplay his opponent in a struggle without clear positional guidelines.

This delusion cost Spassky dearly! However, he learned a great deal and drew some important lessons from his defeat. It became evident to him that to become world champion, you have to play normal openings. And in the 1969 match the challenger played only classical openings – the Queen's Gambit, the Tarrasch Defence. Not at all as in 1966!

But at that time Spassky was still hoping that his 'original' tactics would bring him success, since they would enable him to neutralise Petrosian's opening preparation and to launch a serious struggle with a board full of pieces around the 10-15 move mark: look, the opponent is beginning to get into time-trouble and in the end he loses his way in the complications...

11 d5 (11 ♖fe1 f5!?) **11...e5 12 ♕c1 ♔h7 13 g3**



The champion has hardly played the opening in the best way. Such set-ups with the moves ...g7-g6, ...b7-b6, ...e7-e6 and ...d7-d6, if they are not refuted directly, should at least promise White more of an advantage. But here it is not easy for him to find a suitable plan and he has only a minimal plus, associated with his spatial superiority and the passivity of the bishop at b7.

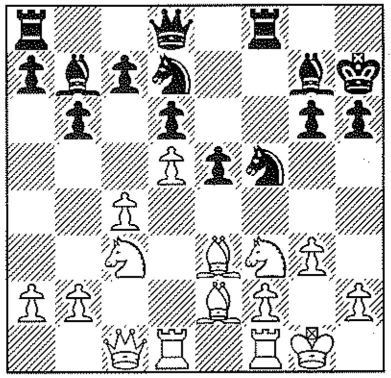
13...f5

In the opinion of the experienced King's Indian player Bronstein, this should have been prepared by 13...a5, then ...♘c5 and ...♗c8.

14 exf5

As is evident, it is now too late for the traditional play with b2-b4 and c4-c5. Therefore Petrosian first defends himself against ...f5-f4 and opens the kingside, emphasising the remoteness of the bishop at b7.

14...♘xf5

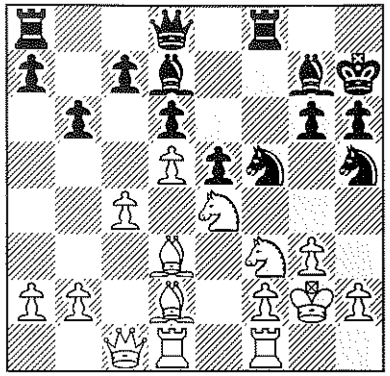


It stands to reason that Spassky prefers to concede the e4-square, avoiding the perceptible weakening of his position after 14...gxf5 15 ♘h4 followed by f2-f4 (immediately or after ♕c2), and if 15...f4, then 16 ♕c2+ ♔g8 17 ♗c1 etc.

15 ♗d3 ♗c8 ('the return of the prodigal son') **16 ♔g2 ♘f6 17 ♘e4 ♘h5!?**

A quieter idea is 17...♗d7 with the idea of ...c7-c6, or 17...♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗d7 (but not 18...♘xe3+?! 19 fxe3! and ♕c2).

18 ♗d2 ♗d7



19 ♔h1

In the slow manoeuvring struggle that has begun, White has retained a definite advantage. The sharp 19 g4?! did not achieve its aim on account of 19...♘h4+! 20 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 21 gxh5 ♕h3+! 22 ♔g1 ♕xd3 23 hxg6+ ♔h8 etc.

19...♘e7 20 ♘h4 ♗h3

If 20...c6 there could have followed 21 f3 cxd5 22 cxd5 ♗h3 (22...♖c8?! 23 ♕b1) 23 ♖fe1 ♘f6 24 g4.

21 ♖g1 ♗d7

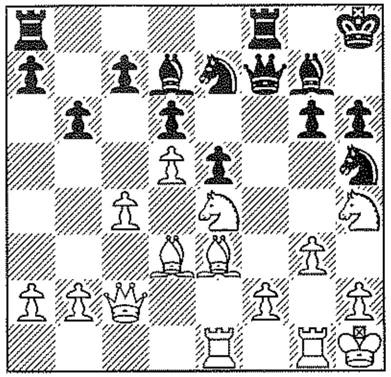
Black's last two moves show that Spassky has not yet decided exactly what to do, and he manoeuvres in the hope of some mistake by the opponent. It was no good to play 21...♕d7? 22 f3! with the threat of g3-g4 (for example, 22...♗f5 23 ♘xf5 gxf5 24 g4!). If instead 21...♗g4, then not 22 f3?! ♗xf3+ 23 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 24 ♗e2 ♖f8 25 ♖df1 ♕d7 26 ♗xh5 gxh5 27 ♕c2 (27 ♕d1 ♕g4) 27...♔h8 with equality, but 22 ♖df1! c6 (if 22...♘f5? 23

f3 ♗h3 then 24 ♘xg6! ♔xg6 25 g4 ♗xf1 26 gxf5+ ♔f7 27 ♕xf1 is strong) 23 f3 ♗h3 24 ♖d1! cxd5 25 cxd5 with the threats of ♗b4 and g3-g4.

22 ♗e3 (22 f3 ♘f6 or 22 ♕c2 ♗e8 are no better) **22...♕e8**

If 22...♘f5? White has the tactical stroke 23 ♘xg6! ♔xg6 24 g4 ♔h7 25 gxf5 ♗xf5 26 ♘g5+! hxg5 27 ♖xg5, regaining the piece with an obvious advantage.

23 ♖de1 ♕f7 (after 23...♘f6 Black has to reckon with 24 f4) **24 ♕c2 ♔h8**



Another critical position. Black has arranged his pieces quite successfully and is now ready to play ...♘f5 followed by ...♖ae8. But here, in my opinion, White made a very strong move:

25 ♘d2!

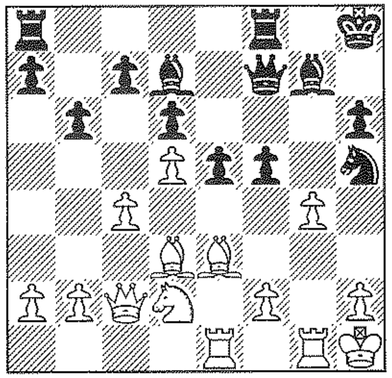
25 ♘c3 ♘f5 26 ♘xf5 gxf5 27 f4 also looks quite good, with a minimal advantage: 27...e4 28 ♗e2 or 27...c5 28 fxe5 dxe5 29 ♖ef1!? ♘f6 30 ♗c1 (not 30 ♗xf5? ♘xd5! 31 ♗xd7 ♘xe3 32 ♖xf7 ♘xc2 33 ♖gf1 ♘e3 34 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8! and ...♘xc4, winning a pawn) 30...e4 31 ♗e2 etc. But Petrosian was hoping for more.

25...♘f5 26 ♘xf5! (nothing was given by 26 ♘xg6+?! ♕xg6 27 g4 ♘hg3+! 28 fxg3 ♕xg4)

26...gxf5

A crucial decision. After 26...♗xf5 White had a choice between 27 ♘e4 with slightly the more pleasant game, although after 27...♘f6 Black could have gained a draw with accurate defence, and the more energetic 27 ♗xf5 gxf5 (27...♕xf5 28 ♕xf5 gxf5 29 g4!? fxg4 30 ♖xg4 ♘f6 31 ♖h4) 28 g4! (28 f3 b5!) 28...fxg4 29 ♖xg4 and ♖eg1 with the initiative.

27 g4!



Of course, Spassky took account of this obvious reply (27...fxg4? fails to 28 ♗g6) and was pinning his hopes on the following pawn breakthrough:

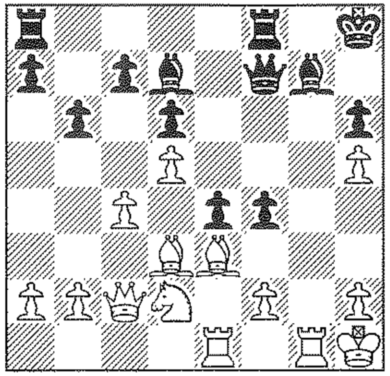
27...e4?

Strangely enough, this is already the decisive error. It is also hard to recommend 27...♘f4?! – after the simple 28 ♗xf4 exf4 29 ♗xf5 White has the f3-square for his knight and the chance of invading with his rook at e7, for example: 29...♗xf5 30 gxf5 ♕xf5 31 ♕xf5 ♖xf5 32 ♖e7 ♗xb2 33 ♖xc7 ♖e8 34 ♘f3 ♖e4 35 ♖d7 ♖xc4 36 ♖xd6 ♖f6 37 ♖d8+ ♔h7 38 ♖d7+ ♔h8 39 ♖xa7 ♖d6 40 ♘h4! and wins.

But if Black had foreseen what was awaiting him, he would, of course, have chosen 27...f4, although after 28 ♗g6 ♕e7 (after 28...♕f6, given in the match bulletin, White has 29 ♗xh5 fxe3 30 fxe3 ♕h4(e7) 31 ♘e4 or 30...♕f2 31 ♕d1!) 29 ♗xh5 (29 ♗d4!? ♘f6 30 f3 is also interesting) 29...fxe3 30 fxe3 ♖f2 31 ♖ef1 ♖af8 32 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 33 ♖g2! ♕h4 34 ♕d1 ♖xg2?! 35 ♔xg2 e4 36 ♘xe4 ♗xb2 37 ♕f3 ♕e7 38 ♗g6! or 34...♖f8 35 ♘e4 he has insufficient compensation for the pawn.

28 gxh5 f4

28...exd3 29 ♕xd3 ♖ae8, which was recommended soon after the game, is unattractive in view of 30 ♘f3 ♕xh5 (30...c5 31 ♗f4!) 31 ♗d4, for example: 31...♖g8 32 ♖xg7! ♖xg7 33 ♖g1 ♖eg8 34 ♕c3 ♕f7 35 ♘g5! ♕g6 36 ♕h3 and wins, or 31...♗f6 32 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 33 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 34 ♕c3 ♕f7 35 ♘d4 with powerful pressure.



A picturesque position: both white bishops are en prise! Of course, White can gain a material advantage by capturing with one of his pieces on e4 here, but then after 29...fxe3 his extra pawns are not felt: Black has sufficient compensation in the form of his two bishops (the g7-bishop is especially strong). But Petrosian finds a combinative refutation.

29 ♖xg7!

A brilliant stroke! Spassky's mistake was that, when he played 27...e4? 28 gxh5 f4 in the hope of gaining good compensation for the sacrificed pawns, he devoted all his attention to 29 ♘xe4 and 29 ♗xe4, and considered 29 ♖xg7! only in passing.

29...♕xg7 30 ♖g1 ♕e5

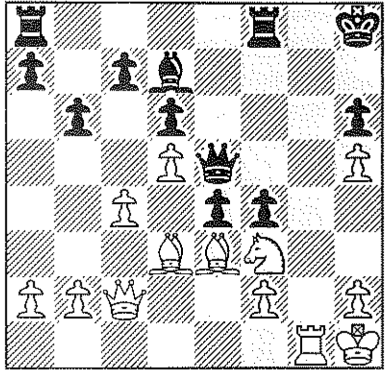
Black would have lost after both 30...♗g4? 31 ♗e2! fxe3 32 ♖xg4 ♕d4 (32...♕e5 33 ♖xe4) 33 ♘xe4, and 30...exd3? 31 ♕xd3 ♕xg1+ 32 ♔xg1 ♖g8+ (32...fxe3 33 ♕xe3 ♔g7 34 ♕c3+ and ♘e4!) 33 ♔h1 fxe3 34 ♕xe3 ♖g5 35 ♘e4! ♖e8 36 h4 ♖xh5 37 ♕d4+ ♖ee5 38 ♘g3.

But now the position looks highly confused: for the moment White has a material advantage, but one of his bishops will be lost and most probably, if he does not do something extraordinary, Black will simply be better. Here it is appropriate to recall the words of Petrosian himself: 'It is thought that the strength of a player depends mainly on his evaluating capability. There exists the routine evaluation of a position. It easily lends itself to study and one can find numerous players who possess this simple skill. But a player should evaluate a position, taking account of seemingly insignificant nuances. A deep penetration into the secrets of a position – this is an indication of true strength.'

Now it is understandable how Petrosian found his next brilliant move.

31 ♘f3!!

Placing a third piece en prise! It is clear that, with the disappearance of the g7-bishop, the black king has suddenly become most uncomfortable.



'Petrosian rightly considered that, firstly, the bishops had nowhere to go, and secondly, with two arbiters watching, in one move Spassky would be unable to capture all three pieces simultaneously. Those who were happy were the spectators. The auditorium began buzzing like an animated beehive.' (Bronstein)

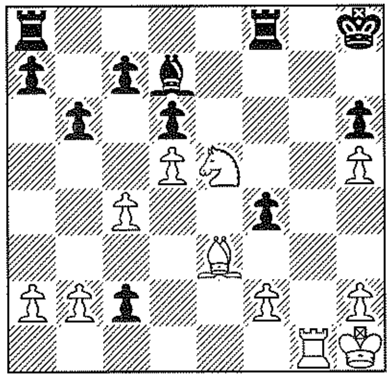
31...exd3 (the only reply: 31...exf3? 32 ♗d2! and ♗c3) **32 ♘xe5?**

'The finish of the game took place in severe time-trouble.' (Petrosian) A highly vexing mistake, and not only because the win was missed. What was spoiled was a brilliant game, the value of which was increased many times by the ultra-high status of the event and the exceptional strength of the opponent.

The accurate 32 ♕xd3! ♗f5 would have led to the same 'windmill' idea as in the game, but Black would not have had a trump in the form of the c2-pawn: 33 ♘xe5 ♗xd3 34 ♗d4! dxe5 (34...♗e4+ 35 ♘f3+! – it was this simple knight retreat that Petrosian overlooked!) 35 ♗xe5+ (one recalls the famous game Torre-Lasker, Moscow 1925) 35...♔h7 36 ♖g7+ ♔h8 37 ♖xc7+ ♔g8 38 ♖g7+ ♔h8 39 ♖xa7+! ♔g8 40 ♖g7+ ♔h8 41 ♖g3+ ♔h7 42 ♖xd3 ♖xa2 43 ♔g2 with a decisive breakthrough by the d-pawn.

A very pretty variation, pointed out by Bronstein and many other commentators. However, in the heat of the rapture regarding the 'windmill', everyone overlooked the cold computer solution – 33 ♕e2!? fxe3 (33...♗e4 34 ♗d2!) 34 ♘xe5 exf2 35 ♖g2 ♗e4 36 ♘g6+ ♗xg6 37 ♖xf2 or 35...♖ae8 36 ♕xf2 ♖xe5 37 h3 ♔h7 38 ♔h2 and wins.

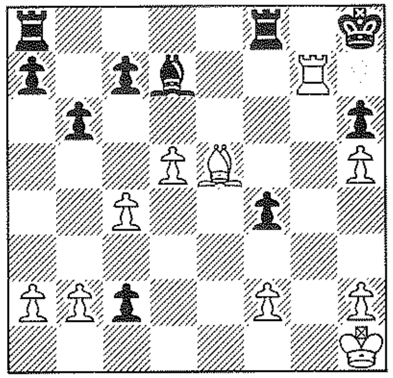
32...dxc2



33 ♗d4! dxe5 34 ♗xe5+ ♔h7 35 ♖g7+ ♔h8

It transpires that the 'windmill', on which Petrosian was pinning his hopes, is no longer so effective: the rook is obliged to return back to deal with the c2-pawn. This pawn is far more dangerous than the bishop was on d3 in the previous annotation: that was lost immediately, whereas here the f2-pawn prevents the rook from capturing on c2, and the position is not so clear.

36 ♖f7+ (36 ♖xd7+!?) **36...♔g8 37 ♖g7+ ♔h8**



38 ♖g6+?!

In time-trouble, vexed by his error, White repeats the position three times. Art truly demands sacrifices! Petrosian was obviously stressed, otherwise with the help of that same 'windmill' he would have easily taken the game to the adjournment – 38 ♖xd7+ ♔g8 39 ♖g7+ ♔h8 40 ♖xc7+ ♔g8 41 ♖g7+ ♔h8 42 ♖xa7+! ♔g8 43 ♖g7+ ♔h8 44 ♖g1+ ♔h7, and at home he could have calmly studied the consequences of 45 ♖c1!? For example:

1) 45...♖fe8 46 ♗c3 f3 47 ♖xc2 ♖e2 48 ♖xe2 fxe2 49 ♔g2 ♖xa2 50 ♔f3 ♖xb2 51 d6 ♖a2 52 d7 ♖a8 53 ♔xe2 ♖d8 54 ♗d4 ♖xd7 55 ♗xb6 ♔g7 56 ♗e3! ♔f6 (or 56...♖d6 57 c5) 57 ♗xh6 ♖h7 58 ♗f4 ♖xh5 59 ♔d3 and Black has to balance on the edge of the abyss;

2) 45...♖xa2 (the most obvious, and probably the best reply) 46 ♖xc2 ♖f5 47 ♗c7 f3 48 h4 b5 49 ♔h2 bxc4 50 d6 ♖f7 51 ♖xc4 ♖xb2 52 ♔g3 ♖d2, nevertheless gaining a draw.

Thus, White would have retained practical chances of success. But in such a nervy atmosphere Petrosian could not even contemplate a position where the c2-pawn remained 'alive', even for just a couple of moves. I can well understand this: in a match for the world championship there is always monstrous tension!

38...♔h7 39 ♖g7+ ½-½

The first half of the match concluded with the score 7-5 in Petrosian's favour.

'For the moment the world champion is surpassing not only Spassky, but also himself,' was Max Euwe's intermediate summing-up. 'We know Petrosian well as a deep strategist, excellent defender and expert on the endgame. But in this match we are also seeing a new Petrosian. He is sacrificing, counterattacking and attacking. In a word, a highly dangerous tactician is emerging.'

But the champion himself was seriously traumatised by the fact that he had missed a chance to create an immortal masterpiece – unique for competitions of this level, where such attacks usually do not succeed. He claimed a postponement and then lost the following, 13th game (this was the first defeat in his career against Spassky!) and the match situation became much sharper. After the 19th game the challenger levelled the scores. However, through his closing efforts Petrosian snatched victory in the match by 12½-11½ and retained his title.

In one of the interviews after the match he said: 'If it is true that a player's style is his person, then everyone plays as he is intended to by nature. I am naturally cautious, and I altogether dislike situations which involve risk. But – and here lies the paradox – I have never complained about my combinative vision! In general I consider that in chess everything rests on tactics. If one thinks of strategy as a block of marble, then tactics are the chisel with which a master operates, in creating works of chess art. Perhaps it is tactical mastery that makes me refrain from many combinations, since I find refutations for my opponents.'

Three years later, in 1969, Petrosian nevertheless wilted under Spassky's onslaught and conceded the chess crown to him. By a twist of fate, the match concluded on the day of Tigran Vartanovich's 40th birthday. He had a house full of guests, among whom were both ex-world champion Euwe and the chief arbiter of the match O'Kelly. 'We sat down at the table, and the mood was non-festive,' recalls grandmaster Averbakh. 'And suddenly Tigran said: "But why, in fact, are we upset?" And he switched on some music. Seeing how he was enjoying himself, singing and dancing, Euwe and O'Kelly concluded: "He doesn't yet know what has happened." Tigran objected: "No, I know what has happened, but now at least I will be able to breathe freely!" He never made a tragedy out of that defeat, although he said with some regret that, if he had been prepared for the match as he had in 1963 or 1966, he would not have lost the title.'

Naturally, Petrosian was not averse to returning to the throne. In the autumn of 1969 he again demonstrated his enormous strength – in the Zonal, 37th USSR Championship: going through the entire tournament undefeated, he shared first place with Polugayevsky (14 out of 22). And then, in January 1970, he defeated him in a play-off match for the title of USSR Champion – 3½-1½ (+2=3).

The Lion* shows its Claws

[*'Lev' in Russian means 'lion' – *Translator's note*.]

It is time also to say something about Lev Abramovich Polugayevsky (1934-1995), a participant in five Candidates matches and perhaps the most outstanding theoretician and analyst among the grandmasters born in the 1930s, a brilliant successor to the traditions of the Soviet Chess School, proceeding from Botvinnik, Boleslavsky, Makogonov, Bondarevsky, Simagin, Furman, Smyslov, Averbakh, Bronstein, Geller and Taimanov.

Polugayevsky announced himself in the summer of 1953, when he took second place and exceeded the master norm in a strong championship of the Russian Federation. His game with Ilivitsky was annotated in the chess column of the magazine *Ogonek* by none other than the world champion Botvinnik! In his first USSR Championships (1956 and 1958) Lev finished quite high: 5th-7th (with Tal and Kholmov) and 5th-6th (with Spassky). His talent was obvious, but at the same time it was mentioned in the press that 'at times Polugayevsky cannot withstand the tension and at the decisive moment, in a situation of sharp rivalry, his presence of mind sometimes fails him.'

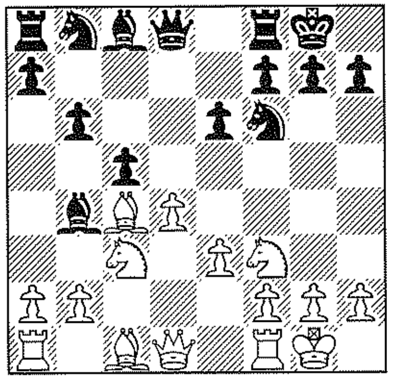
Imagine how hard it was to win a place under the sun, at a time when there was a tremendous array of former and future world champions and long-standing contenders for the chess throne. However, from the early 1960s Polugayevsky slowly but surely began assuming one of the leading roles.

Game 20

L.Polugayevsky-T.Petrosian

27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 14th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E54

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 c5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 b6

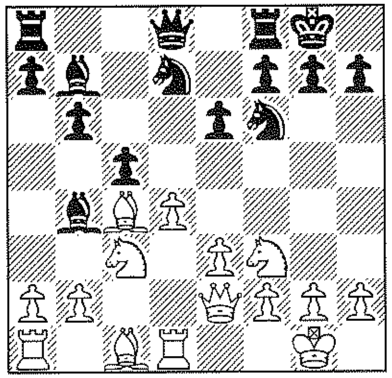


9 ♕e2 (nowadays they have come round to playing 9 a3!) **9...♗b7 10 ♖d1**

'In those years it was easier to win the Soviet Championship than a game against "iron Tigran". Even so, I decided to engage him in a fight, having noticed that in those rare instances when Petrosian did lose or obtained inferior positions, it was when his opponents played directly and sharply, because Petrosian, at times fearing something at the board, would avoid a critical dispute in the opening. It was this that gave rise to the decision to play a variation that is rich in open, tactical play.' (Polugayevsky)

10...♘bd7?!

This is dubious on account of White's sharp reply. It is more solid to play 10...cxd4 11 exd4 ♘bd7 with equality. 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♕c7 is also interesting, practically forcing White to sacrifice a pawn – 13 ♗d3!? (13 ♗b2 ♗xf3!, and 14 gxf3 has to be played, since it is bad to continue 14 ♕xf3?! ♕xc4 15 ♕xa8 ♘c6 16 ♕b7 ♘d5 17 ♖e1 ♖b8 18 ♕d7 ♖d8 19 ♕b7 h5 20 ♗c1? – 20 ♖ac1! – 20...♘a5 21 ♕xa7 ♕c6 22 ♕a6 ♘c4 23 ♖b1 ♘c7 0-1 Vladimirov-Kasparov, Batumi rapidplay 2001) 13...♕xc3 14 ♗b2 ♕c6! (14...♕c7?! 15 d5! Belyavsky-Kasparov, 4th matchgame, Moscow 1983) 15 d5 exd5 with an unclear position.

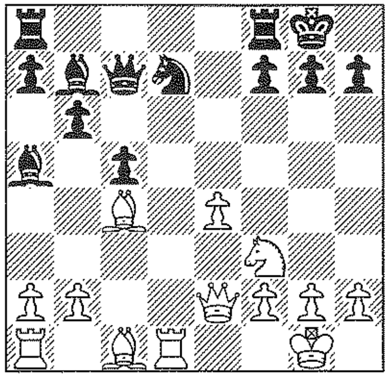


11 d5! (the theoreticians of that time did not consider this move to be dangerous for Black) **11...♗xc3 12 dxe6 ♗a5**

White has the advantage after 12...fxe6 13 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 14 bxc3 ♕e7 15 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♘e1 ♘f6 17 f3 and e3-e4, or 12...♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♗e5 14 exd7 ♕c7 15 ♕h3! ♖ad8 16 f4 ♗d6 17 ♕f3 (17 b3!?) and e3-e4. 'But after the move played the black bishop is out of play, and this allows White to take immediate action in the centre and on the kingside.' (Polugayevsky)

13 exd7 ♕c7 14 e4! ♘xd7

The e-pawn is immune: 14...♘xe4? 15 ♘g5 ♘xg5 (15...♘f6 16 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 17 ♕e6) 16 ♗xg5, or 14...♗xe4? 15 ♗g5! ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♘xd7 (16...♕e5 17 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 18 d8♕+ ♖xd8 19 ♖xd8+ ♘e8 20 ♗b5) 17 ♗f4 ♘e5 (17...♕c8 18 ♗d6) 18 ♕g3 ♖fe8 19 ♖d5 and wins (Polugayevsky).



15 ♘g5! (after a long think White discovers a weak point in the opponent's position – his f7-square; for the moment 16 ♘e6 is threatened) **15...♖ad8**

The natural reply. Black's problems are illustrated by the following variations:

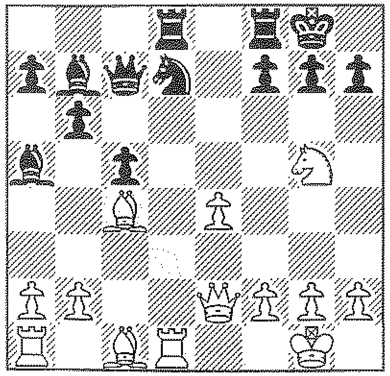
1) 15...♘f6? 16 e5 ♕c6 (16...♖ae8 17 ♗f4) 17 f3 ♖ae8 18 ♗b5 and wins;

2) 15...♘e5 16 ♗f4 ♕e7 (16...♖ae8? 17 ♕h5 h6 18 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 21 ♖d8+) 17 ♗xe5 ♕xg5 (17...♕xe5? 18 ♘xf7) 18 f4 with a strong initiative;

3) 15...♖ae8 16 ♗f4!? (16 f3 h6 17 ♘h3 ♘e5 18 ♗f4 ♕c8 19 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♘f4 is quieter) 16...♕xf4 17 ♖xd7 ♕xg5 18 ♖xb7 ♕e5 19 ♕f3 ♕xe4 20 ♗xf7+! ♔h8 21 ♗xe8 ♖xf3 22 ♗c6 ♕e5 23 ♗xf3 and ♖d1 with a technically won endgame;

4) 15...♗c6 16 ♕f3! ♘e5 (16...♘f6 17 ♗f4) 17 ♕f5 g6 18 ♕h3 h5 19 ♗f4 ♕e7 20 ♗d5 ♖ad8 (or 20...♗xd5 21 exd5 ♖ad8 22 ♕g3) 21 ♗xe5 (21 ♕g3!?) 21...♗xd5 22 ♕g3 ♗c6 23 ♗d6 ♕d7 24 ♕f3 etc.

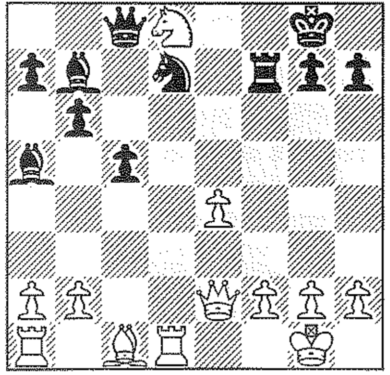
'It is noteworthy that in all these variations the bishop at a5 merely plays the role of a spectator.' (Polugayevsky)



16 ♗xf7+?!

'The decisive blow,' writes Polugayevsky, and he attaches an exclamation mark to this move. However, the correct move was 16 ♕h5! ♘f6 17 ♗f4! ♕e7 (17...♘xh5 18 ♗xc7) and only now 18 ♗xf7+! ♔h8 19 ♕h3 ♗xe4 20 ♗b3 ♗g6 21 ♘e6 ♖xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♖g8 (22...♖e8 23 ♗d6 ♕b7 24 ♗f8! ♘h5 25 g4) 23 ♗d6 ♕e8 24 ♗e5! with an overwhelming advantage.

16...♖xf7 17 ♘e6 ♕c8 18 ♘xd8

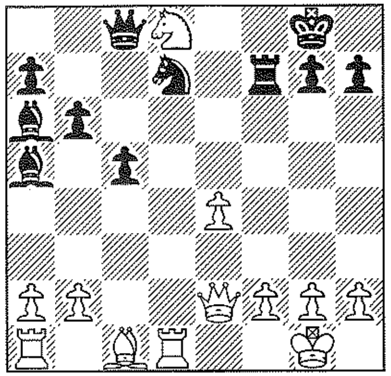


18...♗a6?

'The best chance. After 18...♕xd8 the advance e4-e5-e6 would have won quickly.' (Polugayevsky) And, strangely enough, Petrosian took the opponent at his word!

But in fact after 18...♕xd8! 19 e5 ♕e8 20 e6 ♖f6! a win for White is out of the question:

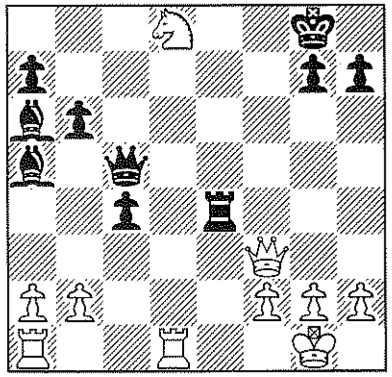
21 exd7 ♕xe2 22 d8♕+ ♖f8, or 21 e7 ♖g6! (21...♔f7 22 ♗g5 ♕xe7 is not so clear) 22 f3 (22 ♖xd7?? ♖xg2+ 23 ♔f1 ♖g1+!, mating) 22...♔f7! 23 ♕c4+ (23 ♗d2 ♖e6 or 23 ♕d3 ♗c6 24 ♕f5+ ♘f6 and ♕xe7) 23...♔xe7 24 ♗f4 (24 ♗d2 ♘e5!) 24...♘f8 followed by ♘e6, and Black retains two pieces for a rook.



19 ♕e3! (after 19 ♕g4?! Black had prepared a cunning trap: 19...♕xd8 20 e5 ♕e8 21 e6 ♖e7!) **19...♖e7**

Here 19...♕xd8 no longer saves Black in view of 20 e5 ♖e7 21 e6 ♗c4 (21...♗c8 22 ♕b3) 22 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 23 exd7 ♕xd7 24 h3 ♕d1+ 25 ♔h2.

20 ♕b3+ c4 21 ♕a3 ♘c5 (or 21...♕xd8 22 ♗g5 ♔f7 23 ♕d6 ♗c8 24 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 25 ♕c7 ♕e8 26 ♕xc4+ ♔f8 27 ♖ac1 ♗b7 28 ♕c7 ♕xe4 29 ♕d8+) **22 ♗e3 ♖xe4 23 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 24 ♕f3 1-0**

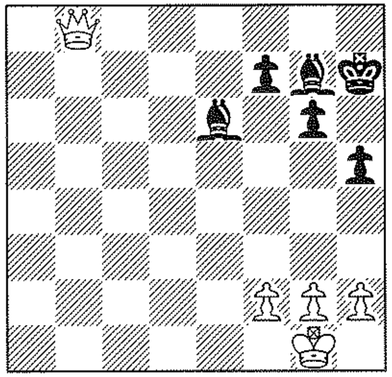


Black resigned in view of 24...♖e7 25 ♘e6!

'Until that day I had enjoyed few such happy moments in chess.' (Polugayevsky)

The general opinion was that Lev Abramovich was one of the strongest masters in the analysis of adjourned positions. 'And this includes positions of the most varied type,' Tal explains in the foreword to Polugayevsky's book *Grandmaster Preparation* (1981). 'These may be very sharp positions, and situations in which there is practically no scope for calculation, which is replaced by abstractions and strategic plans. Here a dogged game of chess patience is played, until the cards – sorry, the pieces! – tally, and a position planned beforehand is reached on the board. And here the interest of endgame theoreticians is aroused, as, say, after the conclusions of the games with Geller or Gligoric.'

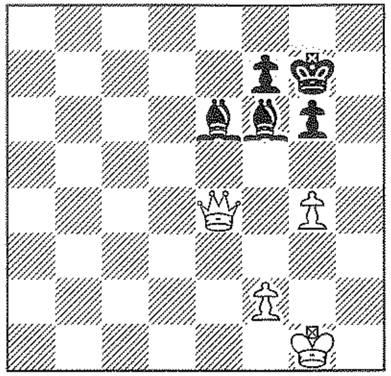
Game 21
L.Polugayevsky-E.Geller
Skopje 1968



31 ♕f4

'Is the queen able to overcome the resistance of the pair of bishops, which are capable in some cases of creating an iron curtain around their king? In principle, the more pawns there are on the board, the harder it is for the weaker side to defend. But at the same time the queen requires space for manoeuvring, and at the moment Black has no weaknesses. And so I prepared the plan of h2-h3, g2-g4, ♔g2-g3 and f2-f4-f5 with winning chances.' (Polugayevsky)

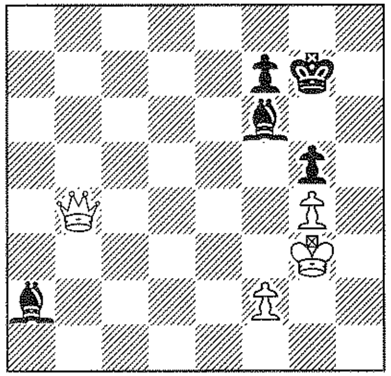
31...♗c3 32 h3 ♔g7 33 g4 hxg4 34 hxg4 ♗f6 35 ♕e4



35...g5!?

In opposing White's idea, Geller weakens his pawns somewhat. 35...♗d8 36 ♔g2 ♗c7 was more patient.

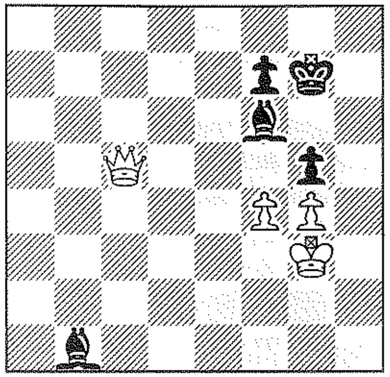
36 ♔g2 ♗e7 (36...♗d8?! 37 f4! ♗xg4 38 fxg5 or 37...gxf4 38 ♕xf4 and wins) **37 ♔h3 ♗f6 38 ♕b4 ♗d8 39 ♔g3 ♗f6 40 ♕c5 ♗a2**



41 f4! ♗b1

'Correct was 41...gxf4+ 42 ♔xf4 with a highly interesting endgame. White's plan would be to advance g4-g5 and to prevent the light-squared bishop from occupying the b1-h7 diagonal. Then the queen would go via the h-file to h6, to support g5-g6 at the appropriate moment. Finally, an ending with queen against two bishops, without pawns, could be reached, but with the black king cut off on the back rank. The endgame would undoubtedly have been of theoretical importance.' (Polugayevsky)

The modern computer, armed with the five-piece program *TableBase*, cracks this 'highly interesting' little problem like a nut: 41...gxf4+ 42 ♔xf4 ♔g8 43 ♕c8+ ♔g7 44 g5 ♗e7 45 ♕c7 ♗f8 46 g6! ♔g8 47 ♔g5 (or, according to *TableBase*, 47 gxf7+ immediately) 47...♗e6 48 gxf7+ ♗xf7 49 ♕b8 ♔g7, and here Black's defence is destroyed by the fine manoeuvre 50 ♕g3! (ambush) 50...♗e7+ 51 ♔f5+ ♔f8 52 ♕b8+ ♔g7 53 ♕e5+ ♔f8 54 ♕h8+ ♗g8 55 ♔g6 etc.



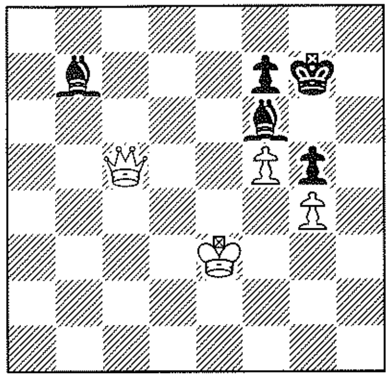
42 f5

The sealed move. After 42 fxg5?! ♗a1 43 ♔f4 ♗g6 44 ♕a5 ♗b2 45 ♕d2 ♗a1 Black would have created a fortress. Polugayevsky imagined that it would be the same after 42 ♔f3! ♗h7 (a piece is lost after 42...gxf4? 43 g5 ♗d8 44 ♕d4+ or 43...♗a1 44 ♕c1) 43 f5 ♗g8 with the idea of ...♗e5 and ...f7-f6. However, at home he discovered that here there is no fortress: 44 ♔e4 ♗a1 45 ♕a3 ♗f6 46 ♔d5, then ♔d6-d7-e8, ♕d6 and if ...♗c3 – ♔e7 with the unavoidable f5-f6!

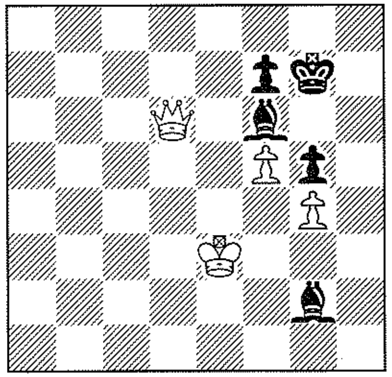
Now the winning path is far more difficult, since the light-squared bishop remains on the a8-h1 diagonal and prevents the approach of the king. On the other hand, the result was an ending about which Polugayevsky later said:

'This is possibly the most meticulous analysis in my career. During the resumption the white queen had to get through a tremendous amount of work, and it was necessary to find an accurate way of utilising her inexhaustible energy.'

42...♗e4 43 ♔f2 ♗h1 44 ♔e3 ♗b7



45 ♕c7! (giving Black the move; 45 ♕d6?! ♗g2 46 ♔d3 ♗f1+ 47 ♔e4 ♗g2+ and the white king cannot break through) **45...♗g2 46 ♕d6!!**

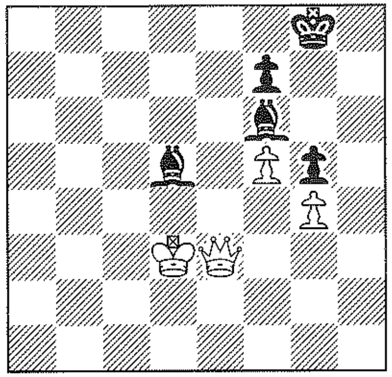


46...♗b7

It transpires that Black is in zugzwang: 46...♗f1 (46...♗a1 47 ♔f2! ♗e4 48 ♕e7 and ♕xg5+) 47 ♕d5! ♗c3 (47...♗e7 48 ♔f2! ♗a6 49 ♕c6 ♗d3 50 ♕c3+; 47...♗a6 48 ♕c6 ♗f1 49 ♔f2 ♗d3 50 ♔f3! ♗f1 51 ♔e3) 48 ♔f2! ♗a6 49 ♕c6 ♗d4+ 50 ♔f3 ♗f1 51 ♕c2 and ♔e4-d5, winning.

47 ♔d3 ♗f3 48 ♕g3 ♗d5 (preventing ♔c4 and hoping to set up a fortress by ...♗a1 and ...f7-f6) **49 ♕e3! ♔g8!**

After 49...♗a2 50 ♔e4 ♗e7 51 ♕a7 ♗b1+ 52 ♔d5 the white king breaks through the line of fire.



50 ♔d2!!

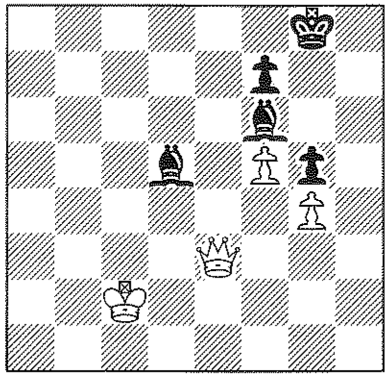
An uncommonly subtle manoeuvre! 'White vacates the d3-square for his queen (so as to dislodge the bishop from its centralised post at d5) and prepares a route for his king into the enemy position via the jumping-off square b3, exploiting a barely discernible nuance: the dark-squared bishop will be temporarily undefended. The immediate 50 ♔c2 would not have achieved anything on account of 50...♔g7 51 ♕d3 ♗h1!! (51...♗a2? 52 ♕b5, then ♔d3-e4, ♕b4 and ♔d5, winning) 52 ♔b3 ♗e5! and ...f7-f6 with a draw.' (Polugayevsky)

50...♔g7

Otherwise the undefended state of the bishop will tell: 50...♗h1? 51 ♕h3 ♗a8 52 ♕h6; 50...♗a2 51 ♕b6 ♔g7 52 ♕b5; 50...♗g2 51 ♕g3 ♗f1 (51...♗e4 52 ♔e3! ♗c2 53 ♕c7 ♗a4 54 ♔e4) 52 ♕f3 ♗b5 53 ♕d5 ♗e8 (53...♗f1 54 ♔e1!) 54 ♔e3 and wins.

51 ♔c2 ♔g8

There has arisen, in the words of Polugayevsky, that position of absolute zugzwang that White has been aiming for: 51...♗d8? 52 ♕e5+; 51...♗c6 52 ♔b3 ♗d5+ 53 ♔b4; 51...♗g2 52 ♔b3 ♔f8 53 ♔c4 ♗e7 (53...♗d8 54 ♔c5 ♗e7+ 55 ♔b6 ♗d8+ 56 ♔a7 f6 57 ♔b8! ♗e7 58 ♔c7 ♗d5 59 ♔d7) 54 ♕g3 ♗f1+ 55 ♔d5 f6 56 ♕b3 ♔f7 57 ♔c6+ ♔e8 (57...♔f8 58 ♔d7) 58 ♕g8+ ♗f8 59 ♕g6+ ♔e7 60 ♕h7+ and mate.



52 ♕d3! ♗c6

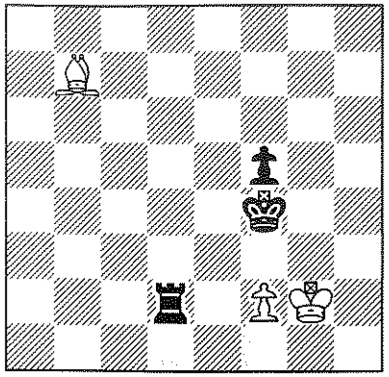
'Other moves similarly fail to save Black: 52...♗a2? 53 ♕a6; 52...♗b7 53 ♔b3 ♗e5 (53...♗a1 54 ♕d8+) 54 ♕b5; 52...♗a8 53 ♔b3 ♗e5? 54 ♕d8+; 52...♗g2 53 ♕g3 ♗e4+ (53...♗h1 54 ♔d3) 54 ♔b3 ♗d5+ 55 ♔a4 ♗c6+ 56 ♔a5 ♗e8 57 ♕b8! ♔f8 58 ♕d6+ ♔g7 59 ♔b6; 52...♗h1 53 ♕d6 ♔g7 54 ♔b3 ♗f3 55 ♕g3 ♗d5+ 56 ♔a4 ♗c6+ 57 ♔a5. It finally becomes clear why White needed to resort to the triangulation manoeuvre with his king: at the decisive moment its opposite number was forced to retreat to g8 and the dark-squared bishop lost its support.' (Polugayevsky)

53 ♕d6 ♗e4+ 54 ♔b3 ♔g7 55 ♔c4 ♗f3 56 ♕g3 ♗h1 57 ♕h3 ♗e4 58 ♕e3 ♗c6 59 ♔c5 ♗d7 60 ♔d6 ♗b5 61 ♕b3 ♗e2 (or 61...♗e8 62 ♕c4 ♔g8 63 ♕c8 ♔f8 64 ♔d5 ♗b2 65 ♕d8) **62 ♕b4 ♗f3 63 ♕c4! ♔g8 64 ♔d7 ♔f8 65 ♕c5+ ♔g8 66 ♔e8** (White has the dual threats of ♕f8+ and ♕c4)

1-0

In the following ending, in the opinion of Tal, 'a good 90% of grandmasters would simply have agreed a draw: after all, it is not even apparent how to set the opponent any difficult problem, never mind place him on the verge of catastrophe!'

Game 22
S.Gligoric-L.Polugayevsky
Amsterdam 1970



73...♖d3

The sealed move. 'In books on the endgame I had never seen this exact position. As I was leaving the tournament hall, I was inclined to think that it was a dead draw. But, on delving into the secrets of the position, I found subtleties of which I would never even have dreamed. It transpired that if the black pawn were at f4, it would indeed be a "dead" draw: the bishop could not be driven off. But, by standing at f5, the pawn does not deprive its own king of the adjacent square and it restricts the scope of the white bishop.' (Polugayevsky)

A lengthy analysis enabled a plan of playing for a win to be found: Black must drive the bishop from the a8-h1 diagonal and restrict it as much as possible by pursuit with the rook, and at a convenient moment advance his pawn ...f5-f4-f3. It is not at all easy for White to defend.

74 ♗c6 ♖c3 (giving the opponent the move)

75 ♗d5

Also after 75 ♗b7!? ♔g4 76 ♗d5 ♖d3! (76...f4?! 77 ♗e6+ ♔g5 78 ♗d5) 77 ♗b7 ♖b3 78 ♗d5 ♖c3! 79 ♗b7 f4 or 78 ♗c6 ♖a3! 79 ♗d5 (79 ♗b7 ♖d3) 79...♖c3 the bishop would be driven off the long diagonal.

75...♔g4 76 ♗e6 ♖c5 (beginning to restrict the bishop) **77 ♗b3 ♔f4 78 ♗d1**

'After 78 ♗e6 Gligoric was evidently afraid of 78...♔e4, when in view of the threat of the pawn march ...f5-f4-f3, 79 ♗f7 was necessary. And as yet he did not want to be in a situation where there was only one move.' (Polugayevsky)

78...♖c6! 79 ♗h5

After 79 ♗e2 (79 ♗f3?? ♖g6+) 79...♖g6+ 80 ♔f1 ♔e4 81 ♗d1 ♖d6 82 ♗h5 (82 ♗c2+? ♔f3) 82...♖h6 83 ♗f7! (83 ♗d1 ♖h1+ 84 ♔e2 ♔f4, or 83 ♗e8? ♔f3 84 ♔g1 ♖e6 85 ♗d7 ♖e1+ 86 ♔h2 f4 and wins) White holds on by a thread.

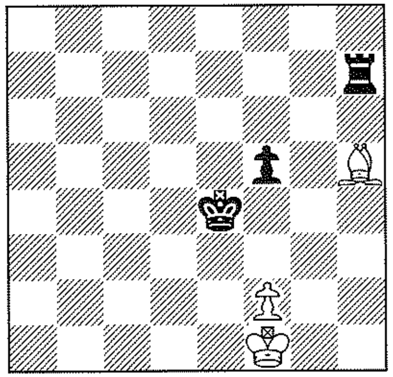
79...♖h6 80 ♗d1 (80 ♗e8 or 80 ♗f7 – 80...♔e4!) **80...♖g6+ 81 ♔f1 ♖d6**

'Very slowly tightening the noose.' (Polugayevsky)

82 ♗h5 (moving the bishop to c2, b3 or a4 was bad because of 82...♔f3) **82...♖d7** (it was also possible to play 82...♖h6 83 ♗d1 ♖h1+ or 83 ♗f7 ♔e4) **83 ♔g2 ♖g7+ 84 ♔f1 ♔e4 85 ♗d1 ♖d7 86 ♗h5**

Again the only move: 86 ♗e2? f4, 86 ♗c2+? ♔f3 or 86 ♔e2? ♖c7! and White is in zugzwang.

86...♖h7



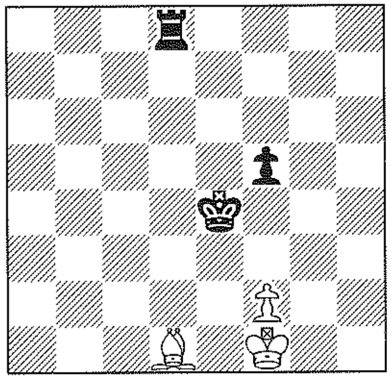
87 ♗e8

It was dangerous to continue 87 ♗d1?! ♖h1+ 88 ♔e2 ♔f4 (avoiding a trap – 88...♖xd1? 89 ♔xd1 ♔f3 90 ♔e1 ♔g2 91 f4! with a draw) 89 ♗a4 ♖a1 90 ♗d7 ♖c1 (with the threat of 91...♖c2+ 92 ♔f1 ♔f3) 91 ♗e6 ♔e5 and ...f5-f4.

87...♖h6!?

'Not seeing how to strengthen his position further, Black comes to a new decision. Since he has "squeezed out" the maximum with his rook on the seventh rank, he switches it to the eighth rank. But first he returns to the sixth rank, at the same time both masking his intention and lulling the opponent's vigilance, and hoping, finally, to see how the bishop behaves on its new diagonal.' (Polugayevsky)

88 ♗a4 ♖d6 89 ♔g2 ♔f4 90 ♗e8 ♖b6 91 ♗a4 ♖a6 92 ♗d1 ♖g6+ 93 ♔f1 ♖d6 94 ♗h5 ♖h6 95 ♗f7 ♔e4 96 ♗b3 ♖c6 97 ♔g2 ♖c1 98 ♗f7 ♖c7 99 ♗h5! (99 ♗a2? ♖b7! and 100...f4, winning) **99...♖g7+ 100 ♔f1 ♖g8 101 ♗d1 ♖d8**



102 ♗a4?

The fatal error. A positional draw would have resulted from 102 ♗h5 (the only move) 102...♖h8 103 ♗f7!, for example: 103...f4 104 ♔g2 f3+ 105 ♔g3 ♖h6 106 ♗e8.

102...♖c8! 103 ♗d7

Alas, the bishop no longer has time to reach the e8-h5 diagonal. White would also have lost after 103 ♗d1 f4 104 ♔g2 ♖g8+ 105 ♔f1 f3 or 103 ♗b3 f4 104 ♔g2 ♖c7! 105 ♗d1 ♖g7+ 106 ♔f1 f3.

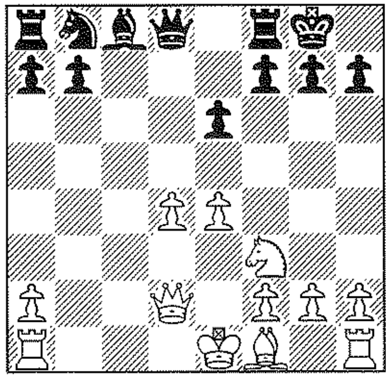
103...♖c5!! (ambush!) **104 ♔e2** (104 ♗e8 f4! 105 ♗g6+ ♔f3 and there is no check at h5; 104 ♔g2 f4 105 ♗g4 ♖g5) **104...f4 105 ♗e8 f3+ 106 ♔d2 ♖d5+ 107 ♔c2 ♔f4 108 ♗f7 ♖g5 0-1**

In view of 109 ♔d2 ♖g2 110 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 111 ♔d2 ♖f1.

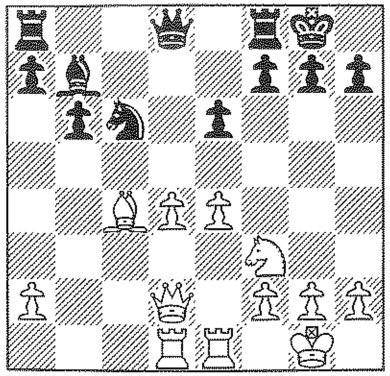
Two silver (1961 and 1965) and two gold (1967 and 1968) medals in USSR Championships, victories in international tournaments, splendid performances for the USSR team in the World Olympiads – all these successes for Polugayevsky were overshadowed by his regular failures in qualifying for the Interzonal tournaments. However, in the Zonal, 37th USSR Championship (Moscow 1969) he finally broke the dismal tradition, by sharing first place with Petrosian, ahead of Geller, Smyslov, Taimanov, Stein and Tal. The tone for this surge was set by the following highly spectacular game, which gave a powerful impetus to the development of the theory of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence.

Game 23
L.Polugayevsky-M.Tal
37th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1969, 2nd round
Queen's Gambit D41

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e4 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ 9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 0-0



11 ♗c4 ♘c6 12 0-0 b6 (12...♕d6!? Portisch-Polugayevsky, Portoroz 1973) **13 ♖ad1!** (13 ♖fd1 – *Volume 1, Game No.145*) **13...♗b7 14 ♖fe1**



14...♘a5!?

The game Spassky-Petrosian (5th match-game, Moscow 1969), played not long before, went 14...♖c8 15 d5! exd5 16 ♗xd5 (*Game No.76*).

'Many commentators, including Tal, recommended the immediate 14...♘a5 or 14...♖c8 15 d5 ♘a5,' Polugayevsky recalls. 'Of course, they were not to know that we had analysed this very continuation in Dubna, where Spassky was preparing for his match with Petrosian, and I was simultaneously preparing for my match with Alexander Zaitsev for the title of USSR Champion. On completing our joint analysis, Boris and I agreed that either of us had the right to employ it at the first convenient opportunity.'

15 ♗d3 ♖c8

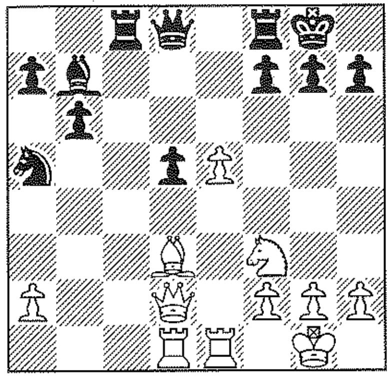
15...♕d6 comes into consideration, as well as the prophylactic 15...h6, although after 16 d5! exd5 17 e5 ♘c4 18 ♕e2 ♕c7 19 ♘d4 ♖ae8 20 f4 White has compensation for the pawn (Gulko-Yusupov, Riga 1995).

16 d5! exd5

If 16...♕d6!? White can fight for the initiative by 17 dxe6 (17 ♕g5 and 17 ♕e3 have also been played) 17...♕xe6 (17...fxe6 18 ♗b5!?) 18 ♘d4 ♕e5 19 ♘f5 (Dokhoian-S.Webb, Moscow 1989).

17 e5!

An unexpected pawn sacrifice for an attack. It is important that the black minor pieces are out of play and it is hard for them to come to the aid of their king.



17...♘c4

A logical activation of the knight. After other replies White usually maintains the better prospects:

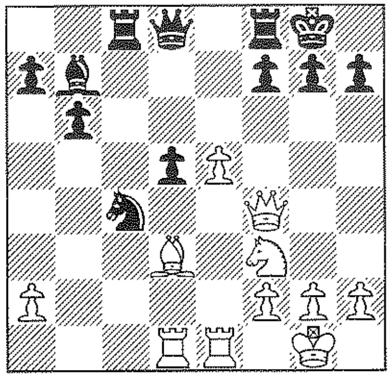
1) 17...h6 18 ♕f4! followed by 19 ♕f5 g6 20 ♕g4 and in some cases h2-h4(-h5) and ♘d4, preparing the e5-e6 breakthrough;

2) 17...♕e7 18 ♕f4 f5 (18...f6 19 ♗f5!? ♖cd8 20 ♕h4 g6 21 exf6 ♕xf6 22 ♘g5 h5 23 ♗e6+ ♔g7 24 ♕g3 with the initiative for the pawn) 19 ♘d4 (19 ♗xf5 g6 20 ♕g5 ♕xg5 21 ♗e6+ ♔g7 22 ♘xg5 ♖c2! is unclear) 19...g6 20 h4 ♘c6 21 ♘b5 ♕e6?! 22 h5 ♖cd8 23 hxg6 hxg6 24 ♖e3 ♖d7 25 ♗c2! with pressure (Bagirov-Zhuravlev, Daugavpils 1974);

3) 17...d4 18 ♘g5! (18 ♘xd4 ♘c4!) 18...h6 19 ♘h7 ♘c4 20 ♕f4 ♘b2, and in the event of 21 ♘f6+!? ♔h8 22 ♖d2 ♘c4 23 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 24 ♖d3 ♖c3 (24...♗c8? 25 g4!) 25 ♖xd4 (Burgess) 25...♕c8! Black can defend, but after 21 ♘xf8! ♘xd1 22 e6 ♖c7 (22...fxe6 23 ♘xe6 ♕d5 24 ♗e4!) 23 ♘h7! ♖e7 (23...fxe6 24 ♖xd1) 24 exf7+ ♖xf7 25 ♕e5 White should win;

4) 17...g6 18 ♕h6 (Polugayevsky) 18...f5 (not 18...f6? 19 ♗xg6) 19 h4! (nothing is achieved by 19 exf6 ♕xf6! 20 ♘g5 ♖c7 21 ♘e6 ♕xf2+ 22 ♔h1 ♖e7) 19...♕e7 20 h5 ♕g7 21 ♕g5 with long-term positional compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

18 ♕f4



The critical position of the entire variation.

18...♘b2?

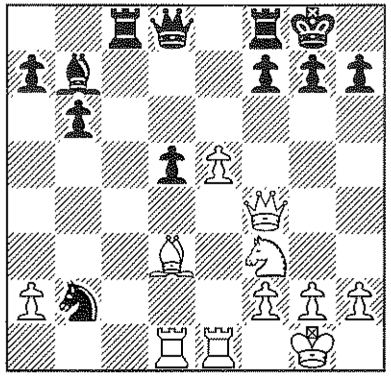
Allowing a brilliant combination. 'Tal tries to exchange the dangerous white bishop, but what else could he have done? If 18...h6 there follows 19 ♕f5 g6 20 ♕h3 ♔g7 21 e6 fxe6 *(? – G.K.)* 22 ♘d4, when Black's position collapses.' (Polugayevsky) However, after 21...♕f6! the outcome is unclear. Therefore consideration should be given to 20 ♕g4!? ♔g7 (20...h5 21 ♕g3) 21 ♘d4.

In Polugayevsky's opinion, 'Black also loses quickly after 18...♖c6 19 ♘g5 h6 20 ♗h7+ ♔h8 21 ♘xf7+ ♔xh7 22 ♘xd8 ♖xf4 23 e6.' But I do not agree with this: after 23...♖f8! 24 e7 ♖e8 25 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 Black is quite alright. And if 23 ♘xb7, then 23...♖e4! (23...♖e6 24 ♖xd5 ♖f5 25 f4! ♖xf4 26 ♘d8 ♖e8 27 e6 is inferior) 24 ♖xe4 (24 f4 ♘b2!) 24...dxe4 25 ♘d8 ♖c7 26 ♘e6 (26 e6 ♘b2) 26...♖c8 27 ♖c1 (27 ♖d7 ♘xe5 with a draw) 27...♔g6 28 g4 b5 29 ♘d4 ♖d8 30 ♘c6 ♖e8 with a drawn endgame.

Instead of 19 ♘g5, a better continuation is 19 ♘d4! ♖c7, and now not 20 ♗xh7+? ♔xh7 21 ♖d3 ♗c8! 22 ♘f5 ♖e8 23 g4 (23 ♖h3+ ♔g8 24 ♘xg7 ♖xe5 and wins) 23...f6 24 ♖h3+ ♔g8 25 ♘h6+ gxh6 26 ♕xh6 (Spasov-Kostakiev, correspondence 1997) 26...♗xg4! and wins, or 20 ♘b5 ♖c5! with equality, but 20 ♖e2 or 20 ♗f5 with the idea of e5-e6, retaining enduring compensation for the pawn.

Apart from 18...♖c6, unclear play results from 18...g6!? 19 ♕h6 f5, and if 20 exf6, then 20...♕xf6 21 ♘g5 ♖c7 22 ♘e6 ♕xf2+ 23 ♔h1 ♖e7! (Burgess). Here too, even with the knight on c4, 20 h4!? is more promising.

Polugayevsky's splendid win (over the great Tal!) undermined Black's belief in this opening variation, although, as an objective analysis shows, his defensive resources are quite considerable.

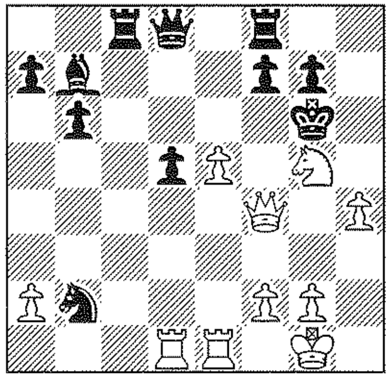


19 ♗xh7+! (Polugayevsky struck Torre with a similar tactical blow in London 1984)

19...♔xh7 20 ♘g5+ ♔g6

After 20...♔g8 21 ♕h4 ♕xg5 22 ♕xg5 ♘xd1 23 ♖xd1 the technical phase begins: 23...♖c2?! 24 ♕e7! (Graeser-Eickhoff, correspondence 1986) or 23...♖fe8 24 h4! etc.

21 h4!!



'This prepared move of fearful strength is the point of the combination! There is the threat of 22 h5+! ♔xh5 23 g4+ ♔g6 24 ♕f5+ ♔h6 25 ♕h7+ ♔xg5 26 ♕h5+ ♔f4 27 ♕f5 mate.' (Polugayevsky) Tal thought for a long time here.

21...♖c4

'A forced reply. 21...f5 would not have saved Black on account of 22 ♖d4! with the same idea of 23 h5+ or 23 ♕g3 *(or 23 ♖e3 – G.K.)*, while if 21...♕d7 White would have won by 22 e6 fxe6 23 ♕g4 ♖f6 24 ♘xe6+ ♔h6 25 ♖e5 g6 (25...♔h7 26 ♘g5+) 26 ♕g5+.' (Polugayevsky) Or 25...♕f7 26 ♖h5+! and ♕xg7 mate (Dimov-Tsolov, correspondence 1990). Other moves have also been tried:

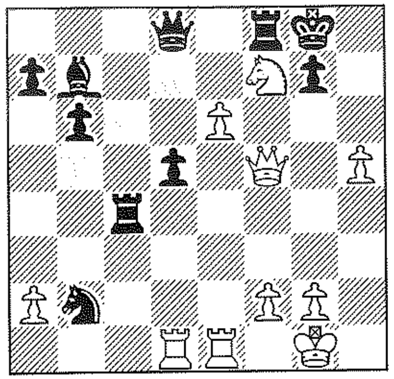
1) 21...♘xd1 22 h5+ ♔h6 (22...♔xh5? 23 g4+) 23 ♘e6+ ♔h7 (23...g5 24 hxg6+ ♔xg6 25 ♕g4+ ♔h6 26 ♕g7+ ♔h5 27 ♘f4+ ♔h4 28 g3 mate – Burgess) 24 ♘xd8 ♖cxd8 25 ♖xd1 ♖de8 26 ♕f5+ ♔g8 27 ♕d7 ♗a8 28 f4... 1-0 (D.Gurevich-Massana, New York 1985);

2) 21...♕e7 22 ♖d4! (22 ♖e3!?; the rook must be included in the attack: instead 22 h5+ ♔h6! 23 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 24 e6 ♕f6! 25 ♕xf6 gxf6 is unclear – Burgess) 22...♔h6 (22...♘c4 23 ♖d3! and ♖g3, winning) 23 ♘e4+ ♔h7 (23...g5 24 ♘xg5 f5 25 exf6!; 23...♔g6 24 h5+! ♔h7 25 ♘g5+ ♔g8 26 ♕f5 or 25...♔h6 26 ♘e6+ ♔h7 27 ♕f5+ ♔g8 28 ♘g5 g6 29 hxg6 f6 30 exf6! ♕xf6 31 ♕h3 ♕xg6 32 ♘e6 and wins) 24 ♘f6+! gxf6 25 ♕f5+ ♔h6 26 exf6! ♕xe1+ 27 ♔h2 ♖g8 28 g4... 1-0 (Krenburn-Ninov, correspondence 1994-96).

Of course, all these colourful variations do not necessarily exhaust White's attacking resources.

22 h5+ (later 22 ♖d4!? was also played) **22...♔h6** (22...♔xh5? 23 g4+ and mate in three moves) **23 ♘xf7+ ♔h7 24 ♕f5+ ♔g8 25 e6!!**

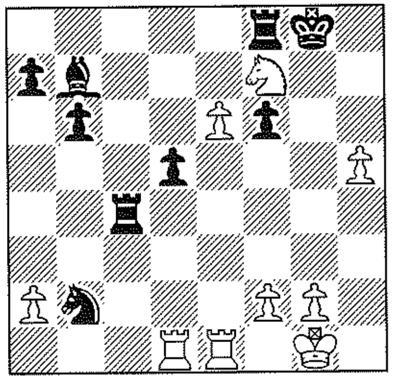
White spent literally only a few minutes on these 25 moves. 'Glancing at this position, I could not believe my eyes: it had been reached that morning on Polugayevsky's board in his hotel room! His analytical work in this variation resembles the best examples of Botvinnik's work.' (Geller)



25...♕f6!

The only way of avoiding an immediate rout such as 25...♘xd1? 26 e7 ♕e8 27 exf8♕+ ♕xf8 28 ♘h6+ gxh6 29 ♕g6+ ♔h8 30 ♖e8, or 25...♕e7? 26 h6! (with the piquant threat of 27 h7 mate) 26...♖h4 27 ♖d4! ♖xf7 (27...♖xh6 28 ♘xh6+ gxh6 29 ♖g4+) 28 exf7+ ♕xf7 29 ♕xf7+ and ♖xh4.

26 ♕xf6 gxf6



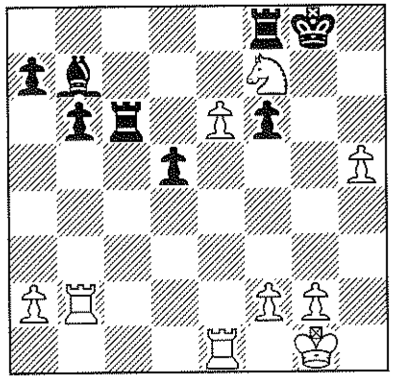
27 ♖d2!

'This slows the tempo of the attack. 27 ♘d6 was more energetic,' Polugayevsky writes, but in *Informator* Volume 8 he adds 27...♘xd1 (I think that 27...♖h4!? also does not lose) 28 e7 ♖c1! Indeed, this ending is drawish: 29 ♘xb7 ♖e8 30 ♘d6 ♖xe7 31 ♖xe7 d4, 29 exf8♕+ ♔xf8 30 ♘xb7 ♘c3 31 ♖xc1 ♘e2+ 32 ♔f1 ♘xc1, or 29 h6 ♖b8 30 ♘xb7 ♖e8 31 ♘d6 ♖xe7 32 ♖xe7 ♘e3+ 33 ♔h2 ♘g4+ 34 ♔g3 ♘xh6 (Naumkin-Nevanlinna, Jyvaskyla 1993).

27...♖c6!

Both 27...♘a4 28 ♘d6! (28 e7? ♔xf7) 28...♗c6 29 e7 ♖e8 30 ♘xc4 dxc4 31 ♖d6, and 27...♖b4 were insufficient, although not because of 28 a3 (Polugayevsky) 28...♖b3! (28...♘c4? 29 ♖d3!) 29 ♘h6+ (Burgess recommends 29 ♖d4 ♖xa3? 30 ♖g4+ ♔h7 31 e7 ♖e8 32 h6 and wins, but after 29...♗c6! there is no win) 29...♔h7 30 ♘g4 ♔g7 31 ♖c1 ♘c4 32 ♖xc4 dxc4 33 ♖d7+ ♔h8! 34 ♖xb7 ♖b1+ 35 ♔h2 ♖e1 with a draw, but in view of 28 e7! ♔xf7 29 exf8♕+ ♔xf8 30 h6 ♘a4 (30...♗a6 31 a3!) 31 ♖de2 ♖e4 32 ♖xe4 dxe4 33 ♖d1! with the decisive invasion of the rook.

28 ♖xb2



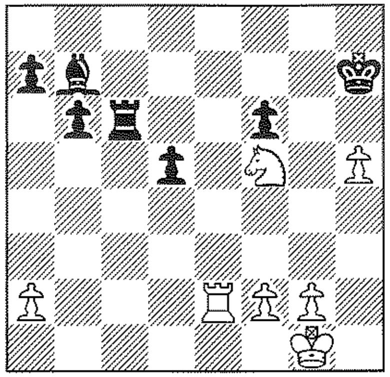
28...♖e8?

'In severe time-trouble Black does not make use of his last chance – 28...♗c8!, when White would have had to overcome a number of difficulties in converting his advantage,' Polugayevsky considers, and here he indicates two possible paths:

1) 29 e7 ♖e8 30 ♘d8. Here, in my view, after 30...♖c7 31 ♖be2 d4! (31...♗g4?! 32 ♖e3 ♗xh5? 33 ♖g3+ ♔h7 34 ♖h3 ♔g6 35 ♘e6!) 32 ♖d2 (what else?) 32...♖exe7 33 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 34 ♖xd4 ♖d7! 35 ♖xd7 (or 35 ♘c6 ♖xd4 36 ♘xd4 ♗g4) 35...♗xd7 36 f3 b5 37 ♔f2 b4 38 ♔e3 a5 39 ♔d4 ♗e8! Black eliminates the enemy pawns and gains a draw;

2) 29 ♘h6+! ♔h7 30 ♘f5 ♖xe6 31 ♖c1. This does indeed retain the advantage – 31...♔g8 32 ♖d2! (32 ♖bc2 ♖e5!) 32...♖d8 33 ♘d4 ♖e7 34 f3 ♖de8 35 ♖c6! or 32...♖e5 33 ♘g3 ♖d8 34 ♖c7, although White still has much work to do.

29 ♘h6+! ♔h7 30 ♘f5 ♖exe6 31 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 32 ♖c2 ♖c6 33 ♖e2!



33...♗c8

If 33...♖c7, then 34 ♖e6! (Polugayevsky), for example: 34...d4 35 ♘xd4 ♔h6 36 ♖xf6+ ♔xh5 37 ♖d6, or 34...♖d7 35 ♖xf6 d4 36 ♔f1 d3 37 ♔e1 d2+ 38 ♔d1 ♗e4 39 ♘d6 ♗xg2 40 ♔xd2 ♗f3 41 h6! with a victorious king march. Also bad for Black is the rook endgame after 34...♗c8 35 ♖xf6 ♗xf5 36 ♖xf5 ♖c1+ 37 ♔h2 ♖c2 38 ♖f7+ ♔h6 (38...♔g8 39 ♖xa7) 39 g4! ♖xa2 40 ♔g3 ♖a1 41 ♖d7, when White's passed pawns are superior.

34 ♖e7+ ♔h8?!

Nevertheless, more tenacious was 34...♔g8 35 ♘h4 ♖c1+ (35...f5 36 ♖xa7 d4 37 ♔f1) 36 ♔h2 ♖c4 37 f4! ♖xf4 38 ♘g6 ♖f5 39 g4 ♖g5 40 ♖e8+ ♔g7 41 ♖xc8 ♖xg4 42 ♔h3 ♖a4 43 ♔g3 ♖xa2 44 ♘f4, and the h-pawn, supported by rook and knight, decides the game.

35 ♘h4 f5 36 ♘g6+ ♔g8 37 ♖xa7 1-0

In his first Interzonal tournament (Palma de Mallorca 1970) Polugayevsky finished a point behind the qualifying 5th-6th places, although the optimistic Larsen named him before the start as his opponent in... the final Candidates match! Some consolation was provided by a fighting draw as Black with the winner of the tournament and the future world champion, the formidable Bobby Fischer.

Game 24

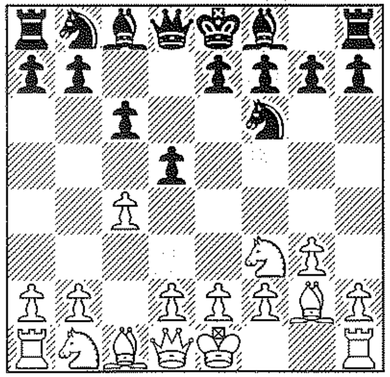
R.Fischer-L.Polugayevsky

Interzonal Tournament,
Palma de Mallorca 1970, 11th round
Réti Opening A11

1 c4!?

'My trainer, grandmaster Boleslavsky, and I realised that Fischer would "throw himself" at me! We had no doubt that he would begin the game with 1 e4, and that meant a Sicilian. I arrived for the game some 30 seconds late and sat down at the board. What's this? There's no Fischer, but on the board the white pawn stands on c4. I thought that I must have gone to the wrong board. I stood up, looked at the demonstration board and then realised: all my opening preparation had been in vain, since for virtually the first time in his life Fischer had played 1 c4. And this in spite of his unbelievable attachment to his favourite opening schemes!' (Polugayevsky)

1...♘f6 2 g3 c6! 3 ♗g2 d5 4 ♘f3



4...♗f5?!

Aiming for the usual 'Lasker' set-up (*Volume 1, Game Nos.71 and 108*). But with the given move order it is better to accept the pawn sacrifice – 4...dxc4! The pawn cannot be immediately regained: 5 ♕c2 b5 6 a4 (6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3 ♗b7) 6...♗b7 7 b3 cxb3 8 ♕xb3 a6, or 5 a4 ♘a6 6 ♕c2 ♕d5, 5...♕d5 or 5...♗e6 with an unclear game (but not 5...b5? 6 axb5 cxb5 7 ♘d4!).

5 ♕b3?!

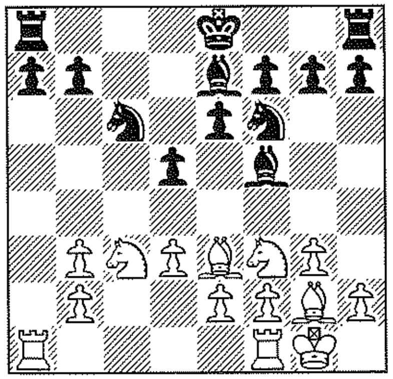
5 cxd5! is correct and only after 5...cxd5 – 6 ♕b3 with advantage: 6...♕b6 7 ♕xb6 axb6 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 d3 e6 (9...e5!?) 10 ♘b5 (Portisch-Smyslov, Wijk aan Zee 1972), or 6...♕c8 7 ♘c3 e6 8 d3 ♘c6 9 ♗f4 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♖ac1 ♗g6 12 ♘e5 ♘d7 (12...♘xe5? 13 ♘xd5!) 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 14 h4! ♘c5 15 ♕d1 ♕d8 16 d4 ♘d7 17 e4 (Korchnoi-Karpov, 15th matchgame, Moscow 1974).

In this situation 5...♘xd5?! is insufficient. In a training game played long ago with grandmaster Bagirov (clock simultaneous, Baku 1975) I replied 6 d3 and, as soon as the pawn centre began advancing, Black lost quickly.

5...♕b6! 6 cxd5 ♕xb3 7 axb3 cxd5

But here 7...♘xd5! is better, for example: 8 ♘c3?! (8 d3 with equality) 8...♘b4! 9 ♘d4? (9 0-0 e6) 9...e5! 10 ♖xa7 (10 ♘xf5 ♘c2+) 10...♖xa7 11 ♘xf5 ♘c2+ 12 ♔d1 ♘a1 13 d3 g6 14 ♗e3 ♖a6 15 ♘h4 ♘xb3... 0-1 (Sumiacher-Polugayevsky, Mar del Plata 1971). The nuances of the Réti, like many other openings, were only beginning to be probed at that time.

8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 d3 e6 10 0-0 ♗e7 (in the opinion of Lev Abramovich, it was more active to play 10...♗c5!? 11 ♘a4 ♗d6 or 11 ♗g5 0-0, but not 10...♔d7?! 11 ♖d1 with the threat of e2-e4) **11 ♗e3!**



11...♘g4!

If 11...0-0 Black did not like 12 ♘d4! ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 a6 14 e4. 'It would have been particularly unpleasant playing such a passive position against Fischer *(say, 14...♗g6 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 18 ♖e3 ♖ad8 19 ♖ae1 ♔f8 20 b4!? f6 21 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 22 ♗c5 ♖dd7 23 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 24 ♗xd5 b6 25 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 26 d4 etc. – G.K.)*. I sensed that I had to find some means of disturbing the balance, even at the cost of some irrational move.' (Polugayevsky)

12 ♗f4 0-0 13 e4!? (13 ♖fc1 is quieter, for example: 13...♗c5 14 ♘d1 ♗b6 15 b4! ♖fc8 16 b5 ♘d4 17 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 18 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 19 h3 with a minimal advantage) **13...dxe4 14 dxe4 ♗g6 15 e5** (threatening 16 h3 ♘h6 17 g4, when the black knight is out of play)

15...♗d3!

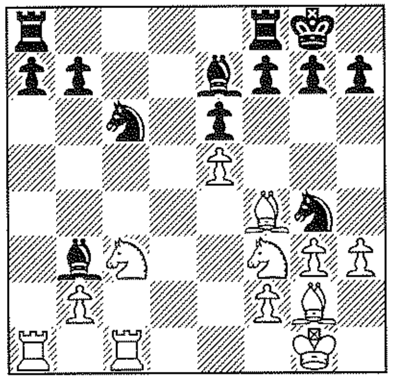
The 'dead' bishop has come alive! A tactical skirmish begins.

16 ♖fd1! (if 16 ♖fc1 there would have followed 16...♗c5! 17 ♘d1 ♗b6 18 h3 ♘h6 19 g4 f6 with equality) **16...♗c2 17 ♖dc1**

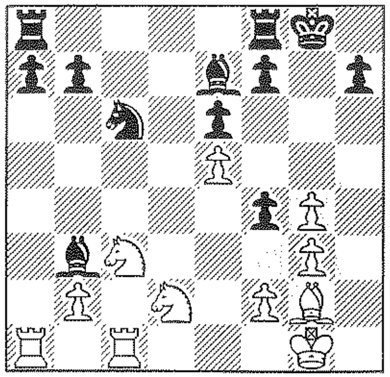
'After 17 ♖d2 ♗xb3 18 ♖d7 (18 h3 g5!) 18...♗c5 19 ♘e4 ♗b6 with the threat of 20...♗d5 Black is alright.' (Polugayevsky)

17...♗xb3 18 h3

The culmination of the battle.



18...g5! (of course, not 18...♘h6? 19 ♘d2!) **19 hxg4** (19 ♗xg5? ♗xg5 20 ♘xg5 ♘gxe5) **19...gxf4 20 ♘d2!** (inferior is 20 gxf4 ♖fd8!)



20...f3!!

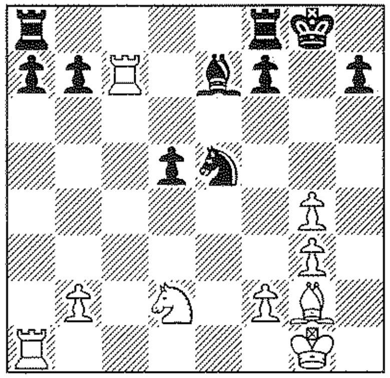
'Black plays in accordance with the favourite principle of Fischer himself – to answer blow with blow.' (Polugayevsky)

21 ♗xf3 (21 ♘xf3?! ♖fd8 or 21 ♘xb3 fxg2 22 f4 ♖fd8 with equality) **21...♘xe5 22 ♗g2**

Forced, since nothing is achieved by 22 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 23 ♗g2 (23 ♖xa7? ♗c5! 24 ♖a5 ♘d3 25 ♘xb3 ♗xf2+ 26 ♔f1 ♘xc1 27 ♘xc1 ♗e3 and wins) 23...♘xg4 with equality, and again 24 ♖xa7? is bad in view of 24...♗c5!

22...♗d5 23 ♘xd5 (if 23 ♗xd5!? exd5 24 ♘xd5 Black was intending 24...♗d8 25 f3 f5 'with good counterplay') **23...exd5 24 ♖c7**

'24 ♗xd5 loses to 24...♖ad8.' (Polugayevsky) No, after 25 ♖c7! White is not losing, but fighting for a draw: 25...♘g6 (25...♖xd5 26 ♖xe7 is equal as is 25...♖fe8 26 ♘e4! ♖xd5 27 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 28 ♘f6+ and ♘xd5) 26 ♗e4 ♖xd2 27 ♗xg6 ♗f6 (27...fxg6 28 ♖xe7) 28 ♗e4 etc.



24...♗d8! (the manoeuvre of the bishop to b6 discloses the weakness of the f2-square) **25 ♖xb7 ♗b6 26 ♗xd5 ♖ad8 27 ♘e4 ♘xg4 28 ♖d1 ♔g7 29 ♖d2 ♘f6**

Relying on the opposite-coloured bishops, which herald a dead draw.

30 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 31 ♖d3 ♔g7! 32 ♔g2 ♖b8 33 ♖d7 ♖bd8 34 ♗c4 ♖xd7 35 ♖xd7 ♔g6 36 g4 ♖d8! 37 ♗xf7+ (37 ♖xf7 ♖d4!) **37...♔g5 38 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 ½-½**

'Fischer was so upset by this, that he signed the score sheet and quickly left the hall.' (Polugayevsky) A tense duel!

It is not hard to guess why, in such an important game, Fischer avoided his favourite move 1 e4. His opponent was an outstanding expert on the Sicilian Defence, especially the Najdorf Variation – the favourite weapon of the American himself. Polugayevsky's contribution to the theory of this opening is probably even more significant than that of Fischer. The following examples provide evidence.

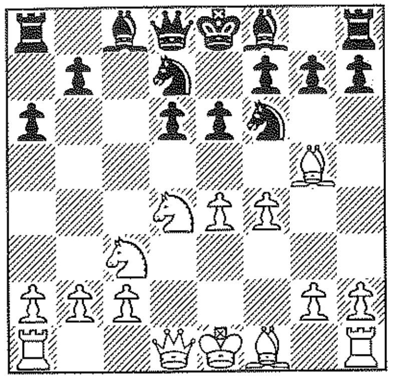
Game 25
E.Geller-L.Polugayevsky
Match-Tournament,
Portoroz 1973, 1st round
Sicilian Defence B96

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5

After Fischer's move 6 ♗c4 the score in Polugayevsky's games was overwhelmingly in favour of Black! It was not without reason that Karpov always preferred the quiet 6 ♗e2.

6...e6 7 f4 ♘bd7!?

Polugayevsky's patent move (along with 7...b5!? – *Game No.26*). Earlier, as he put it, after 7...♗e7 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 ♘bd7 10 g4 b5 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 *(Fischer also tried 11...gxf6?! – G.K.)* 12 g5 ♘d7 13 a3 (13 f5!?) 13...♖b8 14 ♗h3 or 14 f5 Black came under an attack, effectively without making a single mistake! Therefore he economises on a tempo in order to create counterplay on the queenside.

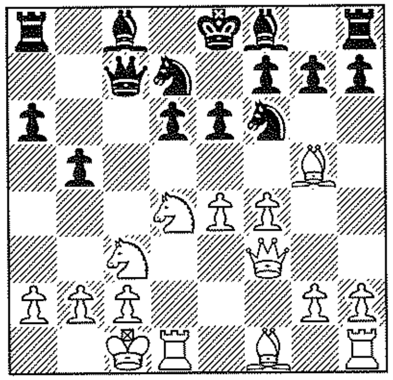


8 ♕f3

If 8 ♗c4, then 8...♕b6!? has quite a good reputation. Subsequently 8 ♕e2 was also tried, but without particular success: 8...♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 g3 (10 g4; 10 a3; 10 f5) 10...b4 11 ♘d5!? exd5 12 ♗g2 (12 exd5+ ♗e7 13 ♘f5 ♘c5! 14 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 Yudasin-Gelfand, Manila Interzonal 1990) 12...♗e7 13 ♘f5 (13 exd5 0-0!) 13...♘b6 (13...h6!?) 14 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 (14...♔d8!?) 15 ♗h6 ♔g8 16 ♘h5 ♘g4 17 ♗g7 ♕c4! 18 ♕xc4 ♘xc4... 0-1 (Shirov-Gelfand, Dos Hermanas 1995).

8...♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5

The first critical position.



10 ♗d3

'After the world championship match in Reykjavik this move quickly gained in popularity. True, Fischer did not play 7...♘bd7, but 7...♗e7. But it can readily be assumed that Spassky had prepared 10 ♗d3 against both methods of development for Black. And of course to Geller, who had worked with Spassky during the period of the match, these continuations must have been very familiar.' (Polugayevsky) Let us also consider other ideas:

1) 10 a3?! ♖b8! 11 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 12 g4 b4 13 axb4 ♖xb4 14 g5 ♘d7 15 f5?! (15 ♕h3) 15...♘e5 16 ♕h3 ♕b6! (the extra tempo makes itself felt: Black has seized the initiative!) 17 ♘b3 ♗e7! 18 g6 fxg6 19 fxe6 ♖xb3!? (in my opinion, it is also strong to play 19...♗b7 20 ♗g2 0-0 21 ♖hf1 ♖xf1 22 ♖xf1 a5 23 ♘d2 a4 24 ♕g3 ♗c6 with an attack for free) 20 cxb3 ♕xb3 21 ♕g3 (a more tenacious defence is 21 ♖d4!? ♗xe6 22 ♖b4 ♕xb4 23 ♕xe6 ♕b7 24 ♘d5 ♕d7 25 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 26 ♗xa6 with chances of saving the game) 21...♗xe6 22 ♘e2?! (22 ♘d5 ♕a4! is sharper) 22...0-0! 23 ♕xb3 ♗xb3... 0-1 (Bronstein-Polugayevsky, Moscow 1967);

2) 10 e5!? (a critical attempt) 10...♗b7 11 ♕h3 dxe5 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 with the sequel 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♗e2 h5 16 ♘d5 ♗xd5 17 ♖xd5 ♘c5 18 ♕f5 ♕c6 19 ♕g6+ ♔f8 and ...♕e8 with equality (Van der Wiel-Kasparov, Amsterdam 1991), 14 ♘xb5 axb5 15 ♗xb5 ♗e4! (Kamsky-Gelfand, Linares 1993), or 14 ♗xb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♕c6 16 ♘d6+ ♔d8 17 fxe5 ♔c7 18 ♕xe7 ♖xa2 19 exf6 ♖a1+ 20 ♔d2 ♕d5+ 21 ♔c3 ♕a5+ 22 ♔d3 ½-½ (Nisipeanu-Shirov, Las Vegas 1999);

3) 10 ♗xb5!? (another sharp attempt) 10...axb5 11 ♘dxb5 ♕b8 12 e5 ♖a5! 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♗h6! ♗xh6 15 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 16 ♔b1 ♘b6?! 17 ♕e4 (17 ♘ce4!) 17...♖d8 18 ♘db5?! (18 ♕b4) 18...♖xb5 (18...♕xf4!?) 19 ♘xb5 ♘d5! 20 c4 (20 ♕d3!?) 20...♗a6! 21 cxd5 ♕xb5 22 ♖he1? (22 dxe6 ♕d3+!; 22 ♖d4!?) 22...♗b7! 23 ♕xh7 ♗xd5 24 ♕xh6 ♖b8! 25 ♖d2 ♗xa2+!... 0-1 (Balashov-Polugayevsky, Manila Interzonal 1976).

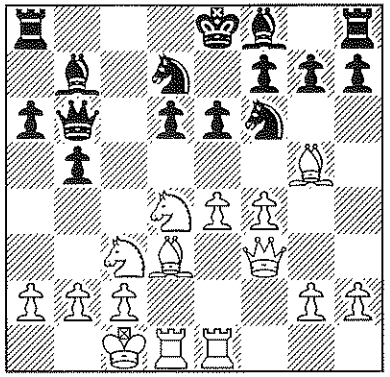
The immediate 16...♖d8! is more accurate, for example: 17 ♖he1 ♘b6 18 ♘cb5 ♗a6! (18...♖xb5?! 19 ♘xb5 Timman-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 2002) 19 ♘f5+ (19 ♕c3? ♖xb5) 19...♔f8 20 ♕c3! ♖xb5 21 ♕xf6 ♖xb2+! 22 ♕xb2 ♘d5 23 ♖xd5! ♕xb2+ 24 ♔xb2 ♗g7+ 25 ♘xg7 ♖xd5 ½-½ (Lutz-Gelfand, Dortmund 2002) in view of 26 ♘xe6+ fxe6 27 ♖xe6 ♗f1 28 g3 ♖b5+.

Thus, theory is still inclined towards the conclusion that direct attacks do not win and that White does better to aim for at least a slight advantage, by completing his development with 10 ♗d3.

10...♗b7 11 ♖he1 ♕b6!?

'A new move, prepared beforehand. Of course, it is a risky experiment to make a second move with the queen while leaving the remaining pieces in their places, but it was not easy to refute at the board. In another game of mine with Geller (Kislovodsk 1972) I played 11...h6, and after 12 ♗h4 ♗e7 13 ♘d5!? ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♗xh4 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♕h5+ ♔d8 White gained a strong attack, although I succeeded in beating it off and winning.' (Polugayevsky) Another dangerous try is 12 ♕h3! (Timman-Polugayevsky, Hilversum 1973).

After 11...♗e7 there is both 12 ♘d5!? (Velimirovic) and 12 ♕g3! (Spassky-Fischer, 15th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972). Nowadays 11...0-0-0 is usually played, for example: 12 ♕g3 b4 13 ♘b1 ♗e7 14 ♘d2 h6 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 with equality (Kengis-Gelfand, Tilburg 1992), or 12 a3 ♗e7 13 ♕e2!? h6 (not immediately 13...♘c5? 14 ♗xb5! axb5 15 ♘dxb5 ♕b6 16 e5) 14 ♗h4 ♘c5 (Adams-Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1994).



12 ♘xe6?

Efim Petrovich was a maximalist! 'On this move Geller thought for 90(!) minutes. But he was unlucky: I had analysed this tempting sacrifice at home.' (Polugayevsky) Soon afterwards Spassky demonstrated a quiet and sure path – 12 ♘b3 (*Game No.80*).

However, Geller did not resign himself to the need to retreat his knight and later he devised 12 ♘d5!? Independently of him this spectacular stroke was invented by my fellow-student, the Baku master Rostislav Korsunsky – and he showed the variations to grandmaster Gufeld, the trainer of Maya Chiburdanidze. After 12...exd5? there follows 13 ♘c6! and if 13...d4, then 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d5 16 e6 ♘7f6 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 (I remember that we also looked at 18...♔d7 19 ♗f5+ ♔c7 20 ♕f4+ ♗d6 21 ♖e7+ ♔xc6 22 ♗e4+ ♔c5 23 ♕f2 ♗f4+ 24 ♕xf4 ♗xe4 25 ♕e5+ ♗d5 26 ♖c7+) 19 ♗g6+!! (Korsunsky's idea) 19...♔xg6 20 ♘e5+ ♔h6 21 ♘f7+ ♔g6 22 ♘xh8+ ♔h6 23 ♕h3+. A very pretty win!

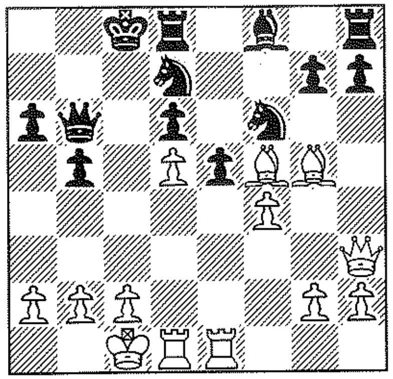
The source game Chiburdanidze-Dvoiris (Tallinn 1980) went 13...♗xc6, but this too did not save Black from a crushing defeat: 14 exd5+ ♗e7 15 dxc6 ♘c5 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♗f5 ♕c7 (17...♔f8 18 c7; 17...♖a7 18 ♖xd6 ♔f8 19 c7! ♕xc7 20 ♖c6) 18 b4! ♘e6 19 ♕h5 ♘g7 (19...♘f8 20 ♕h6 ♖g8 21 ♕xf6) 20 ♗d7+ ♔f8 21 ♕h6 d5 (21...♕d8 22 ♖d3) 22 ♖xe7! ♔xe7 23 ♖e1+... 1-0

However, later it transpired that to 12 ♘d5!? Black should reply 12...♕xd4! with an unclear and interesting game after the possible 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♗xb5 ♕a7, 14...♕c5, or even 14...♕xd1+ 15 ♕xd1 axb5.

12...fxe6 13 ♕h3 e5!

If 13...♗e7, 13...0-0-0, or 13...♘c5, then 14 e5! is strong, whereas now White is unable to build up an attack that fully compensates for the piece he has given up.

14 ♘d5 (or 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♕e6+ ♗e7) **14...♗xd5 15 exd5 0-0-0! 16 ♗f5** (16 fxe5 dxe5 17 ♖xe5 ♗d6! is unfavourable for White)



16...♔c7!

In the event of the 'greedy' 16...exf4?! 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♖e8! ♖xe8 19 ♗xd7+ ♔d8 20 ♗xe8 ♕e3+ (20...♔xe8 21 ♖e1+) 21 ♕xe3 fxe3 22 ♗c6 White would have escaped with a draw.

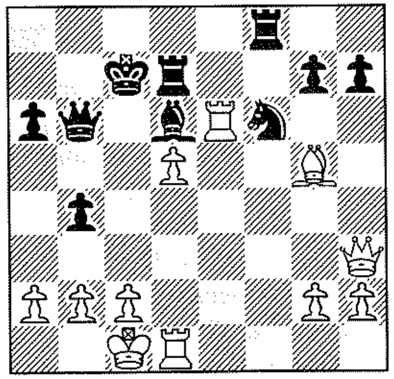
17 ♖e3?!

'An indifferent move, since all the same ...b5-b4 came into Black's plans. White should have played 17 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 18 fxe5, regaining one pawn with the prospect of winning another.' (Polugayevsky) Although the position after 18...dxe5 19 ♖xe5 ♗d6 20 ♖e6 ♖f8 is almost identical to one reached in the game.

17...b4 18 fxe5 dxe5!

Not wishing to remain with a bad bishop after 18...♘xe5 19 ♗xf6 gxf6. Here White, as Polugayevsky put it, could still have attempted to confuse matters by 20 ♖b3.

19 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 20 ♖xe5 ♗d6 21 ♖e6 ♖f8



22 ♔b1? (22 ♕h4 was more tenacious, but Geller was already in severe time-trouble) **22...♘xd5!**

'Eliminating the chief enemy. If 23 ♖xd5 Black wins by 23...♖f1+ 24 ♗c1 ♖xc1+ 25 ♔xc1 ♗f4+. The remainder is simple.' (Polugayevsky)

23 ♕b3 ♖f5 24 ♗h4 ♕b5 25 ♖ee1 ♖e5 26 ♗g3 ♖xe1 27 ♖xe1 ♗xg3 28 ♕xg3+ ♔b7 29 a3 a5 30 axb4 axb4 31 ♕f3 ♕c6 32 ♕f5 g6 (32...♘e3?? 33 ♖xe3 ♖d1+ 34 ♔a2 ♕a4+ 35 ♖a3 with a draw) **33 ♕f3 ♖c7 34 ♕d3 ♕c4 35 ♕d1 ♖f7 36 ♕d2 ♖d7 37 ♕f2 b3! 38 cxb3 ♕xb3 0-1 (time)**

Thanks largely to this win at the start of the additional match-tournament, Polugayevsky qualified for the Candidates event for the first time. Later, having adapted to the Interzonals, he gained similar successes in 1976 and 1979. And when in spring 1980 he was drawn against Tal in the Candidates quarter-final match, Lev Abramovich was not afraid to employ his 'Variation', his most risky invention in the Sicilian Defence, demonstrating how much he trusted his own analyses. Psychologically this was a challenge to the great master of attack!

It should be said that Tal had lost the first game of the match with Black and, naturally, he was burning with desire to get even in the second. However, the peak of his form, achieved in the Interzonal tournament in Riga, had already passed, and the former world champion looked a pale shadow of himself. Whereas his opponent had prepared excellently for the match.

Game 26

M.Tal-L.Polugayevsky

Candidates Match,
Alma Ata 1980, 2nd game
Sicilian Defence B96

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 b5!?

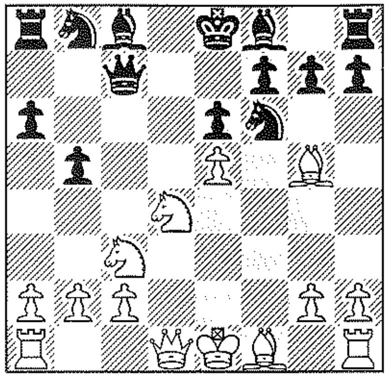
The ultra-audacious 'Polugayevsky Variation', devised in the late 1950s, is much sharper than 7...♗e7, 7...♘bd7 (*Game Nos.25 and 80*), 7...♕c7 (*Game No.81*) or even 7...♕b6 (*Game No.41*). Now the value of each move is very high and it is not easy for White to find his way in the resulting complications.

8 e5

The main line. 'White immediately casts doubts on the opponent's queenside activity and strikes a blow in the centre, exploiting the pin on the knight at f6.' (Polugayevsky)

8...dxe5 9 fxe5 ♕c7!

The point of the entire variation.



10 ♗xb5+?!

A novelty by the master Alvis Vitolins, Tal's second. Not long before the match Tal and I had a short training session in Baku and the former world champion casually let slip: 'You know, there is Vitolins's idea 10 ♗xb5+.' I remember suspecting that nothing good would come of this. And in fact that is what happened. But first let us see how Polugayevsky responded to other moves:

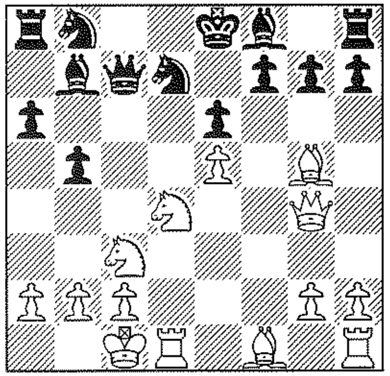
1) 10 exf6 ♕e5+ 11 ♗e2 (an inferior alternative is 11 ♘e4 ♕xe4+ 12 ♘e2 ♘c6! 13 ♕d2 h6! 14 ♗e3 ♗b7 15 ♘g3?! ♕e5 16 fxg7 ♗xg7 17 ♗d3 ♘b4! 18 0-0 ♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♖d8 20 ♕e2 h5! Nezhmetdinov-Polugayevsky, 29th USSR Championship, Baku 1961) 11...♕xg5 and:

a) 12 0-0 ♕e5 13 ♘f3 (13 ♗h5 g6 14 ♗f3 ♖a7 15 ♘e4 ♖d7 16 c3 ♗b7 with equality, Kavalek-Polugayevsky, Bugojno 1980; 13 ♔h1!?) 13...♗c5+ 14 ♔h1 ♕xf6 15 ♘e4 ♕e7 16 ♘fg5 0-0 (16...f5!? 17 ♗h5+ g6 18 ♘xh7! ♔f7! 19 ♘hg5+ ♔g7 20 ♘xc5 ♕xc5) 17 ♘xf7! ♖xf7 18 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 19 ♗h5+ ♔g8 20 ♘xc5 (Belyavsky-Polugayevsky, Moscow 1979) 20...♖a7! and White's advantage here is only slight;

b) 12 ♕d3 ♕xf6 13 ♖f1 ♕e5 14 ♖d1! (14 0-0-0 ♖a7! 15 ♘f3 ♕f4+ and ...♖d7) 14...♖a7 (14...♕c7? 15 ♗h5! g6 16 ♗f3 ♖a7 17 ♘c6 Belyavsky-Polugayevsky, Moscow 1981) 15 ♘f3 (15 ♘dxb5!? ♖d7 16 ♕c4 Wolf-Polugayevsky, Groningen 1993) 15...♕c7 16 ♘g5! (16 ♘e5 ♗e7 17 ♘xf7 ♕xh2!) 16...f5 17 ♕d4 h5 18 ♖xf5!? (18 ♕h4; 18 a4) 18...exf5 19 ♘d5 ♕d7! 20 ♕h4 (20 ♖d3!? Van der Wiel) 20...♗e7 21 ♔f1 ♗xg5 22 ♗xh5+ ♔f8 23 ♕xg5 ♖xh5 24 ♕xh5 ♕f7 25 ♕h8+ ♕g8... ½-½ (Tal-Polugayevsky, 4th matchgame, Alma Ata 1980).

Later, to avoid these altogether wild complications, the main line became 17...♕e7! 18 ♘ge4 h5 19 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 20 ♕xa7 ♕e5! 21 ♕d4 ♘d7! (Am.Rodriguez-Polugayevsky, Biel Interzonal 1985), or 18 ♗h5+!? g6 19 ♕xh8 ♕xg5 20 ♗f3 ♘d7! with sharp play (Hellers-Polugayevsky, Haninge 1989);

2) 10 ♕e2 ♘fd7 11 0-0-0 (hoping to maintain the outpost at e5 and create an attack on the king caught in the centre) 11...♗b7 (at one time the main move) 12 ♕g4.

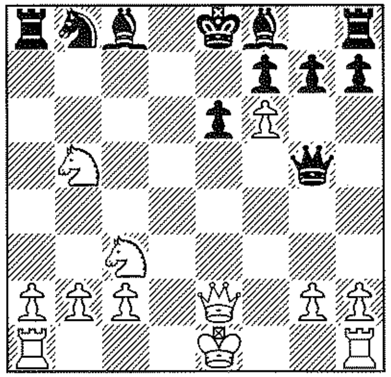


Analysis diagram

12...♕b6 (if 12...♕xe5, the quiet 13 ♗e2! is considered the strongest, although Morphy-style play is also possible: 13 ♗xb5?! axb5 14 ♘cxb5 h5? 15 ♘c7+!! ♕xc7 16 ♘xe6 ♕e5 17 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 18 ♕e2+ ♘e5 19 ♕xe5+! Berezyuk-Izhin, Lvov 1976) 13 ♗e2 ♘xe5 (13...h6 14 ♕h3! ♗c5?! 15 ♘xe6!) 14 ♕h3! ♘bd7 15 ♖he1 h6 16 ♗h4 g6?! (Kavalek-Polugayevsky, Las Palmas 1974) or 16...g5?! (Kavalek-Polugayevsky, Manila 1975), and it soon transpired that in both cases 17 ♘xe6! is strong.

It appears that here too Tal would be in his element. However, in the game Grünfeld-Polugayevsky (Riga Interzonal 1979) Black successfully tried 11...♘c6!? 12 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♕d3 (13 ♘e4 ♗b7) 13...h6! 14 ♗h4 ♗b7 15 ♗e2 ♕c7 16 ♖he1 (16 ♖hf1!?) 16...♘c5 17 ♕h3 (17 ♕d4!?) 17...b4!? (17...♖c8 is more solid) 18 ♘b5! axb5! 19 ♗xb5+ ♗c6 20 ♕f3 ♘b3+!! 21 ♔b1? (the correct path is 21 axb3! ♖a1+ 22 ♔d2 ♕d7+ 23 ♔e3 ♗c5+ 24 ♔f4 g5+ 25 ♔g3 ♖xd1! 26 ♗xc6 ♖xe1 27 ♗xd7+ ♔f8 28 ♕f6! ♖e3+ 29 ♔g4 ♖e4+!, maintaining the balance) 21...♘a5 22 ♖d4 ♖c8! 23 ♖ed1 g5... 0-1.

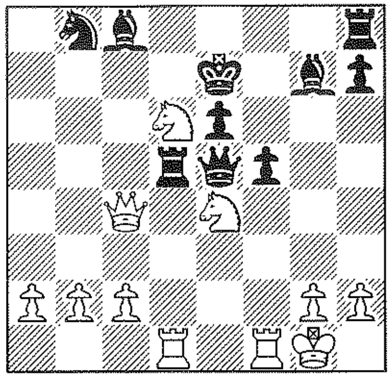
10...axb5 11 exf6 ♕e5+ 12 ♕e2 ♕xg5 13 ♘dxb5



13...♖a5! (after spending about an hour, Polugayevsky found an acceptable defence) **14 fxg7 ♗xg7** (14...♕xg7?! 15 0-0-0 is inferior) **15 ♘e4 ♕e5**

The counter-sacrifice 15...♖xb5?! 16 ♘xg5 ♖xg5 was something White could only dream of: 17 0-0-0 etc.

16 ♘bd6+ ♔e7 17 0-0 f5 18 ♖ad1 ♖d5! (not 18...fxe4? 19 ♖f7+ ♔d8 20 ♘c4+ ♖d5 21 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♖xd5+ exd5 23 ♕h5) **19 ♕c4**



19...♖xd1?

Black quite naturally, but incorrectly strives to simplify the position. It was also bad to play 19...♗d7? 20 ♕b4! ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 fxe4 22 ♘c4+, or 20...♘c6 21 ♘xf5+ ♔f7 22 ♘e7+.

It is strange that no one mentioned the move 19...♗a6!, which promises Black the better chances: 20 ♕b4 (20 ♕c7+ ♘d7) 20...♔d7 21 c4 (21 ♘c5+ ♔c6 22 ♘xa6 ♘xa6 23 ♕b7+ ♔xd6 24 ♖xd5+ exd5 25 ♕xa6+ ♔e7) 21...♘c6 22 ♕a3 ♖a5 and the discovered checks do not promise anything – 23 ♘f7+? ♕d4+! 24 ♕e3 ♔e7!, or 23 ♘b5+ ♔c8 24 ♕b3 ♗xb5 25 ♘d6+ ♔b8 26 ♘xb5 ♔a8 27 ♖d7 ♕c5+ 28 ♔h1 ♗e5 etc.

20 ♖xd1 fxe4 (20...♗d7? 21 ♕b4!; 20...♕xb2? 21 ♕c5!) **21 ♘xc8+ ♔f7** (21...♖xc8?! 22 ♕xc8 e3 23 ♕b7+ ♔e8 24 c3 e2 25 ♖e1 is insufficient) **22 ♘d6+ ♔g6 23 ♘xe4**

Now White has excellent compensation for the piece: three pawns and an attack on the 'bare' king.

23...♘a6 (completing his development; 23...♖f8 24 ♖d6! or 23...♖e8 24 b4!) **24 ♘f2**

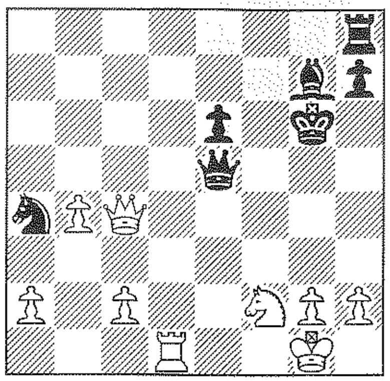
24 c3!? ♖f8 25 ♕d3 ♘c7 26 ♖e1 was also tempting.

24...♘c5

It looks dangerous to play 24...♘c7 25 ♘g4! ♕g5 (25...♕f5? 26 ♖f1; 25...♕h5?! 26 ♖f1 ♖f8 27 ♕e4+) 26 h4 ♕e7 27 ♕e4+ ♔f7 28 ♕f4+ ♔g8 29 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 30 ♕xh6 etc.

25 b4 ♘a4

The turning point of the game and of the entire match.



26 ♘g4?

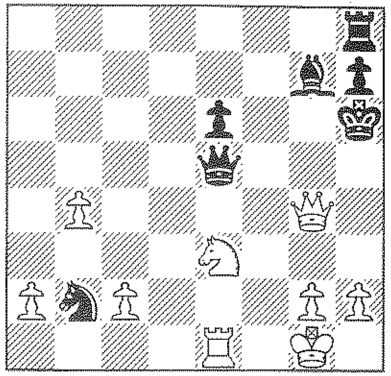
According to analysis by Lepeshkin, confirmed by the computer, 26 ♕d3+! would have given White every chance of winning: 26...♕f5 *(26...♔f7? 27 ♕d7+; 26...♔h5?! 27 g4+ ♔h6 28 ♕h3+ ♔g6 29 ♖d7! – G.K.)* 27 ♕g3+ ♕g5 28 ♕b3!, for example:

1) 28...♖f8 29 ♕xe6+ ♗f6 (29...♖f6 30 ♕e8+ ♔h6 31 ♖d3 ♕c1+ 32 ♘d1!; 29...♕f6 30 ♕e4+ ♕f5 31 ♖d6+ ♗f6 32 g4 ♕xe4 33 ♘xe4) 30 ♘g4!? ♕f5 *(30...♔g7 31 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 32 ♖d7+ ♔h8 33 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 34 ♖c7 – G.K.)* 31 ♕xf5+ ♔xf5 32 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 33 ♖f1+ ♔e5 34 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 35 ♔f2;

2) 28...♘c3 29 ♕xe6+ ♕f6 (29...♗f6? 30 ♖d3 ♕c1+ 31 ♘d1 and wins) 30 ♕g4+ ♕g5 31 ♖d6+ ♗f6 32 ♖c6 and in the endgame, as in the above variations with 28...♖f8, the role of the pawns increases sharply.

26...♕f5 27 ♘e3 (if 27 ♖e1, then not 27...♖e8? 28 ♘e3 ♘b2 29 ♕c6, but 27...♖f8! 28 ♖xe6+ ♔h5 29 h3 ♗d4+ 30 ♔h1 ♕f1+ 31 ♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 32 ♔h2 ♘c3 with a probable draw) **27...♘b2! 28 ♕h4 ♕e5 29 ♕g4+ ♔h6 30 ♖e1?!**

It probably made sense to force a draw – 30 ♕h4+ ♔g6 (30...♕h5? 31 ♘f5+!) 31 ♕g4+ ♔h6 32 ♕h4+.

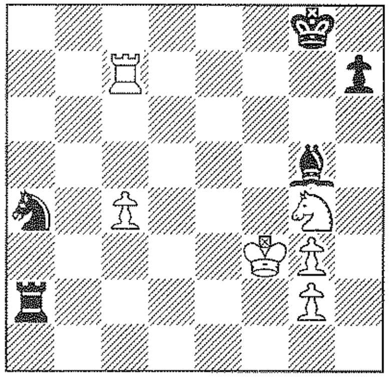


30...♗f6 31 b5 ♖f8 32 b6? ♗g5 33 ♕g3 ♕xg3 34 hxg3 ♔g7? (in the time scramble Black misses a certain win: 34...♖b8 35 ♘g4+ ♔h5 36 ♘e5 ♖xb6 37 ♔f2 ♔h6) **35 ♘g4 ♘c4 36 ♖xe6 ♖b8 37 ♖c6 ♘xb6 38 ♖c7+ ♔g8 39 c4 ♘a4 40 ♔f2 ♖b2+**

40...♖f8+ 41 ♔e2 h5 42 ♘h2 ♘c3+ 43 ♔d3 ♘xa2 44 ♘f3 is unclear, but the computer prefers 40...♘c3!?

41 ♔f3 ♖xa2

Here 41...♘c3 was no longer so tempting.

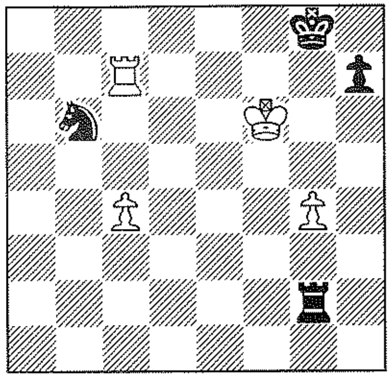


42 ♔e4?

The final error. White should have tried for a draw with 42 ♘e5 ♖d2 43 ♔g4, for example: 43...♗d8 44 ♖d7! (without the rooks White has nothing to fear), 43...♗e3 44 ♖c8+ ♔g7 45 ♖c7+ ♔f6 46 ♘d7+ ♔e6 47 ♘f8+, or 43...♗h6 44 c5! ♗g7! (Polugayevsky) 45 ♖c8+ ♗f8 46 c6 ♘b6 47 ♖b8 ♘c4 48 ♘d7 ♖xd7

49 cxd7 ♘e5+ 50 ♔f5 ♘xd7 51 ♖b7. Here 43...♗f6 44 ♖c8+ ♔g7 45 ♖c7+ ♔h6 46 ♖c6 ♔g7 47 ♖c7+ is no better.

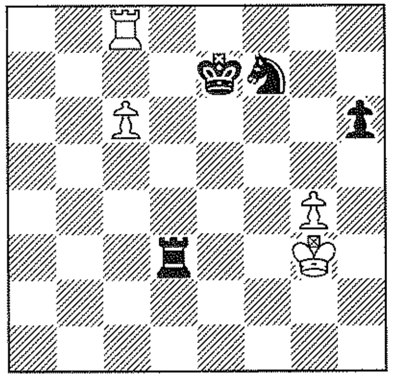
42...♖e2+ 43 ♔f5 ♗e7 44 ♘f6+ (or 44 ♘e5 ♗d6 45 ♖c8+ ♔g7 etc.) **44...♗xf6 45 ♔xf6 ♘b6! 46 g4?!** (46 ♔f5 was nevertheless more tenacious) **46...♖xg2** (46...♖c2!? 47 ♖c6 ♘d7+)



47 ♔g5

It was also hopeless to play 47 g5 ♖c2 (47...♖d2!?) 48 ♖c6 (48 g6? ♘d5+; 48 ♖g7+ ♔h8 49 ♖b7 ♖f2+ 50 ♔e5 ♘xc4+) 48...♘d7+ 49 ♔e6 ♘f8+.

47...♖d2 48 c5 ♘d7 49 c6 ♖d5+ 50 ♔h6 ♖d6+ 51 ♔g5 ♘e5 52 ♖c8+ ♔g7 53 ♖c7+ ♘f7+ 54 ♔f5 h6 55 ♔e4 (55 ♖c8? ♖f6+ 56 ♔e4 ♘d6+) **55...♔f6** (55...♖g6!?) **56 ♖c8 ♖d1** (56...♘g5+!) **57 ♖f8 ♖d6! 58 ♖c8** (58 c7 ♖c6) **58...♘g5+ 59 ♔e3 ♔e7 60 ♔f4 ♘f7 61 ♔g3 ♖d3+**



62 ♔g2

If 62 ♔h4 Black would have won by 62...♘g5 63 ♔h5 ♔f6! (with the threat of ...♖h3 mate) 64 ♖f8+ ♔g7.

62...♖c3 63 ♖c7+ ♔f6 64 ♖c8 ♘e5 65 c7 ♘f7 66 ♖g8 (the c-pawn was doomed in any case) **66...♖xc7 67 ♔g3 ♖c1** (67...♖c3+ 68 ♔h4 ♘g5? 69 ♖g6+!) **68 ♖a8 ♘e5 69 ♖f8+ ♔g7 70 ♖f5 ♖c3+ 0-1**

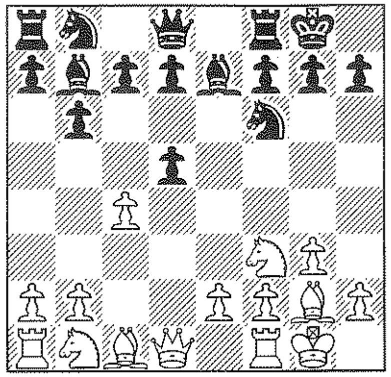
Effectively the decisive game of the match: the score became 2-0 and Tal lost heart.

It was Polugayevsky's analyses that discouraged many of his opponents from playing 6 ♗g5: here things became too hot for White! His great services to the Sicilian were worthily marked by the well-known chess patron Joop van Oosterom, who on the occasion of the grandmaster's 60th birthday organised a thematic super-tournament (Buenos Aires 1994) with the obligatory moves 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 and 3 d4. And what happened? Although the tournament was not officially rated and it was possible to play riskily, without fear of losing rating points, out of the 56 games the continuation 2...d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 occurred only once: 6...e6 7 f4 ♕b6 8 ♘b3 etc. A unique instance in opening theory: it would appear that only one player was capable of playing the variation with 7...b5!? – the author himself, Lev Abramovich Polugayevsky...

In the summer of 1980 he battled in the Candidates semi-final match with an old and difficult opponent – Viktor Korchnoi. It was the best of 12 games. After the 11th game Korchnoi was leading 6-5, so that in the next game only a win would do for Polugayevsky. And he applied all his mastery to this game!

Game 27
L.Polugayevsky-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Match,
Buenos Aires 1980, 12th game
Queen's Indian Defence E17

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 b6 3 g3 e6 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 0-0 ♗b7 6 d4 0-0 7 d5!? (an attempt to disrupt the somewhat drowsy course of play, typical of the Queen's Indian Defence; 7 ♘c3 – *Volume 1, Game No.94*; 7 b3 – *Volume 2, Game No.62*) **7...exd5**



8 ♘h4!

An astounding novelty and a genuine revelation! After 8 ♘d4 in the 6th game there followed 8...♘c6 9 cxd5 ♘xd4 10 ♕xd4 c5 11 ♕d3 d6 12 a4 a6 13 ♘a3 b5 14 ♗f4 b4 15 ♘c4 with a slight advantage to White, but in the 8th game Black replied 8...♗c6!? 9 cxd5 ♗xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 11 e4 ♘b4 12 ♘c3 ♗f6 13 ♘f5 ♖e8! and he converted his extra pawn on the 96th move.

'When preparing for the decisive 12th game, I spent many hours studying the position after Black's 13th move, but I was unable to improve White's play. I was forced to go back, and here I managed to find a completely new line in an opening which had apparently been thoroughly studied. Yet another demonstration of the inexhaustible nature of chess!' (Polugayevsky)

8...c6 (8...♘e4 9 cxd5 ♗xh4 10 ♗xe4 ♗f6 11 ♕c2 g6 12 ♘c3 favours White) **9 cxd5 ♘xd5** (or 9...cxd5 10 ♘c3 ♘a6 11 ♘f5 ♘c7 12 ♗f4 with some advantage) **10 ♘f5**

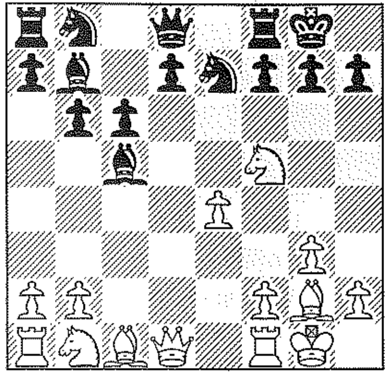
With his knight on d4 White usually played 10 e4 and 11 ♘c3, but the forced leap to f5 is also not bad.

10...♗c5?!

In the new situation Korchnoi fails to make the best move. After 10...♘f6 11 e4 d5 12 ♘c3 dxe4 (Polugayevsky-Stean, Malta Olympiad 1980), 13 ♘xe4! with the threat of ♗g5 is good. It is sounder to play 10...♘c7 11 ♘c3 d5 (11...♘e8!? Timman-Karpov, Tilburg 1983) 12 e4 ♗f6 and then 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♗f4 ♘ba6 15 ♖e1 ♘c5! (15...♕d7 16 ♗h3 ♔h8? 17 ♘e4! with an attack, Kasparov-Marjanovic, Malta Olympiad 1980), or 13 ♗f4 ♗c8! 14 g4!? ♘ba6 with sharp play (Kasparov-Karpov, 2nd matchgame, Moscow 1984/5).

11 e4 ♘e7

Subsequently both 11...♕f6 and 11...♘c7 were tried, with variable success.



12 ♘xg7!

An unexpected blow, which changes the picture. Black was hoping for 12 ♘d6 ♕c7! 13 ♗f4 ♘g6 14 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 15 ♗d6 ♖e8 16 ♘c3 ♘a6 with a solid position and an extra pawn. But White had prepared another fate for his king's knight!

12...♔xg7 13 b4!

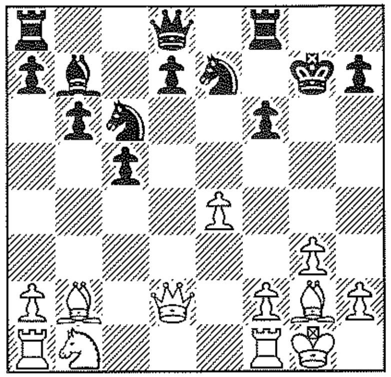
'White regains his piece and the opponent's dark squares on the kingside are irreparably weakened.' (Polugayevsky)

13...♗xb4

An interesting alternative is 13...♗a6 14 ♖e1 (14 bxc5?! ♗xf1 15 ♗xf1 f6 16 ♗b2 ♘g6 17 ♘a3 is really too daring) 14...♗xf2+!? (Black fails to equalise by 14...♗xb4 15 ♕d4+ f6 16 ♕xb4 c5 17 ♕c3 ♘bc6 18 e5! ♘f5 19 ♗f4 ♘fd4 20 ♕d2) 15 ♔xf2 ♘g6 and the black knights acquire the e5-square. After 16

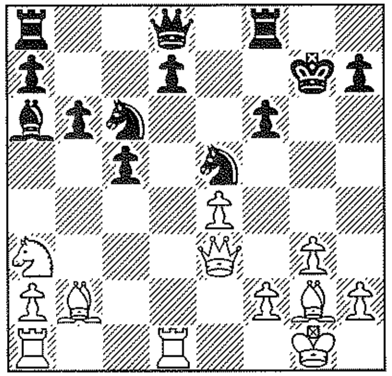
♗b2+ f6 White is unable to demonstrate the advantages of his position (17 ♔g1 d6 and ...♘d7), therefore I suggest 16 e5!? f6 17 ♕h5 fxe5+ 18 ♔g1 ♔h8 19 ♗g5 ♕e8 20 ♘c3, retaining an attack.

14 ♕d4+ f6 15 ♕xb4 c5 (experience has shown that White also has a dangerous initiative after 15...d5 16 exd5) **16 ♕d2 ♘bc6 17 ♗b2**



'The check at h6 is unnecessary, since there is no point in driving the black king out of the firing line. White's overall plan consists in organising the e4-e5 breakthrough, after which it will all be over. Realising this, Black tries by tactical means to hinder or at least delay it.' (Polugayevsky)

17...♗a6 18 ♖d1 ♘e5 19 ♘a3 (with the impending threat of f2-f4) **19...♘7c6 20 ♕e3!**

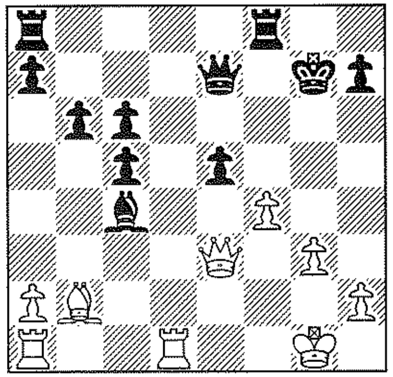


'This modest move, over which I thought for more than half an hour, performs the classic role of a cold shower, preventing Black from confusing matters in variations such as 20 f4 ♘d3 21 e5 ♘xb2 22 ♕xb2 ♘d4 23 ♗xa8 ♕xa8.' (Polugayevsky) True, here too 21 ♗c3! would have retained the advantage, for example: 21...c4 22 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 23 ♗f1.

20...♕e7

Black's problems are underlined by 20...♘b4 21 ♖d6! (with the threat of ♖ad1) 21...♘bd3 (21...♘ed3? 22 ♕g5+) 22 f4 ♘xb2 (22...♘g4? 23 ♕e2!) 23 fxe5 fxe5 24 ♕d2 ♘d3 25 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 26 ♕xd3 etc.

21 f4 ♘c4?! (21...♘g4 22 ♕f3, while if 21...♘g6, then 22 e5 or 22 h4, but this was the lesser evil) **22 ♘xc4 ♗xc4 23 e5 fxe5 24 ♗xc6! dxc6**



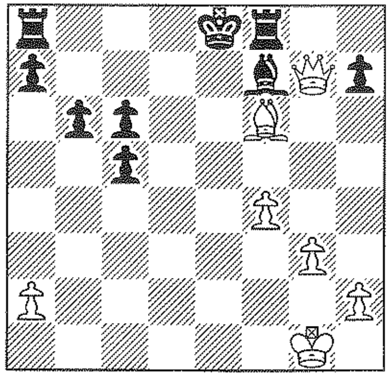
25 ♖d7!!

'An explosive move. With his few remaining forces White begins a direct attack, which is merely strengthened by the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.' (Polugayevsky)

25...♕xd7 26 ♕xe5+ ♔f7?! (26...♔g6 27 ♕g5+ ♔f7 28 ♖e1!, as in the game) **27 ♕f6+**

White would have won more quickly by 27 ♖e1! ♕e6 (27...♕g4 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕h8+ ♔f7 30 ♕xh7+ and mate, or 27...♗e6 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♕g5+ ♔f7 30 f5) 28 ♕c7+ ♔e8 29 ♕xc6+ ♔e7 30 ♕b7+.

27...♔g8 28 ♕g5+ ♔f7 29 ♖e1 ♕e6 (alas, this is forced: 29...♗e6? 30 f5 and wins) **30 ♕g7+ ♔e8 31 ♖xe6+ ♗xe6 32 ♗f6 ♗f7**



33 ♗g5

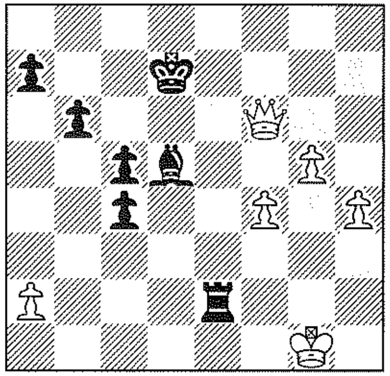
33 ♕xh7!? ♔d7 34 g4 ♖ae8 35 g5 would also have won easily, but White, by creating the threat of ♕e5+, also wants to win the exchange.

33...♔d7 34 ♗h6 c4 35 ♕xh7 c5 36 ♗xf8 (anxious play: 36 g4 or 36 h4 was simpler) **36...♖xf8 37 ♕g7 ♔e7 38 ♕e5+ ♔d7 39 g4?!**

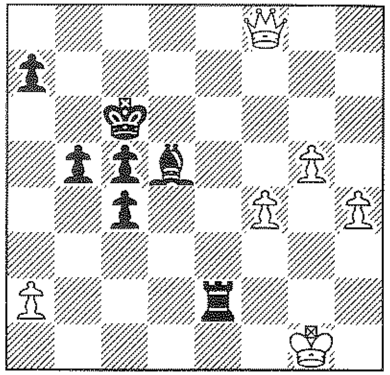
Apparently the consequence of time-trouble. 39 ♕f6 or 39 ♕g7 ♔e7 40 g4 was clearly stronger.

39...♖e8 40 ♕f6 ♗d5 41 g5 ♖e2 (Black has become active!) **42 h4**

The sealed move. If 42 g6 there could have followed 42...c3 43 ♕xc3 ♖g2+ 44 ♔f1 ♖xg6. But even so, a queen is a queen and White has not thrown away the win. On the resumption there followed:



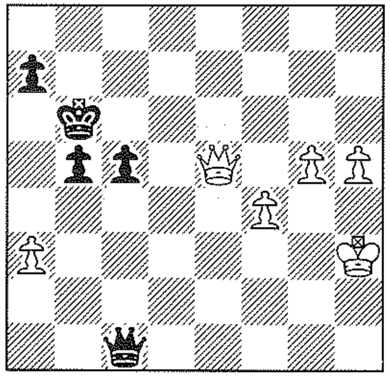
42...b5 (42...♖xa2? 43 h5 and wins) **43 ♕f5+ ♔d6 44 ♕f8+ ♔c6 45 ♕c8+ ♔d6 46 ♕d8+ ♔c6 47 ♕a8+ ♔d6 48 ♕f8+! ♔c6**



49 a3! ♖e3 (the black pawns have been halted: 49...c3? 50 ♕f6+, or 49...a5? 50 ♕a8+ and ♕xa5, while if 49...♖a2, then 50 ♕f6+ ♔c7 51 ♕c3) **50 h5 c3 51 ♕f6+ ♗e6**

It was also hopeless to play 51...♔c7 52 ♕g7+! ♔c6 (52...♔c8 53 ♕f8+) 53 h6 ♗e4 (53...c2? 54 ♕g6+) 54 ♕f6+ (54 h7? c2) 54...♔d7 55 ♕f7+ ♔d6 56 ♕f8+ ♔c6 57 ♕e8+ ♔d6 58 ♕e5+ ♔c6 59 ♔f2, or 56...♔d5 57 ♕g8+ ♔d4 58 h7 ♗xh7 59 ♕xh7 b4 60 axb4 cxb4 61 ♔f2.

52 ♔f2! c2 53 ♕b2 ♖h3 54 ♔g2 ♗f5 (54...♖xh5 55 ♕xc2) **55 ♕f6+!** (transposing into a won queen ending) **55...♔c7 56 ♕xf5 c1♕ 57 ♕e5+ ♔b6 58 ♔xh3**



58...b4

Or 58...♕h1+ 59 ♔g4 ♕d1+ 60 ♔f5 ♕xh5

61 ♕d6+.

59 axb4 cxb4 60 h6 ♕h1+ 61 ♔g4 ♕d1+ 62 ♔f5 ♕c2+ 63 ♔f6 b3 64 h7! ♕xh7 65 ♕e3+ ♔c6 66 ♕xb3 ♕h8+ 67 ♔e7 ♕h4 68 ♕c4+ ♔b6 69 ♕b4+ ♔c6 70 ♕e4+ ♔b5 71 ♔f7 a5 72 g6 ♕g4 73 ♕e5+ 1-0

The 'normal time' of the match ended in a draw: 6-6.

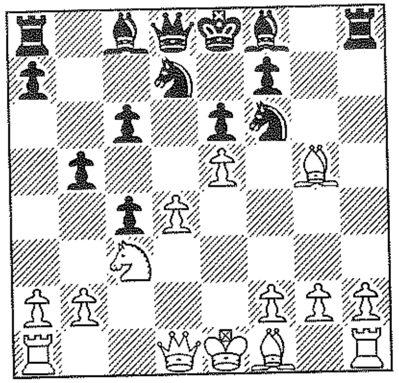
Then, however, Korchnoi found in himself the strength to land the final blow. Alas, at critical moments in both this and his previous match with Korchnoi (1977), and in his match with Karpov (1974), Polugayevsky lacked not the chess qualities, but rather the purely fighting qualities to successfully oppose his tougher opponents. He could not withstand the tension of the struggle!

On the other hand, in all his matches Polugayevsky usually solved his opening problems very successfully. 'Playing White, he is a fearful opponent for lovers of the King's Indian Defence,' wrote Petrosian, 'while with Black he has in his armament the Nimzo-Indian Defence and any Queen's Indian set-up *(plus the Meran Variation – G.K.)*, but the main arrow in his quiver is the Sicilian Defence.' This description was confirmed by the match with Tal, while Mecking was unable to equalise against Polugayevsky with either Black or White! Karpov and Korchnoi also frequently experienced difficulties in the opening and succeeded only in the subsequent complicated play.

Indeed, his innovatory contribution to modern opening theory is hard to overestimate. Take the following memorable duel, which was judged the most important theoretical game in the 31st volume of *Informator*. At that time Polugayevsky's discovery led to a revival of the move 5 ♗g5 and of active attempts by White to refute the Botvinnik Variation, which proved incredibly durable and as a result became enormously popular at the turn of the 20th century.

Game 28
L.Polugayevsky-E.Torre
Moscow 1981, 6th round
Semi-Slav Defence D44

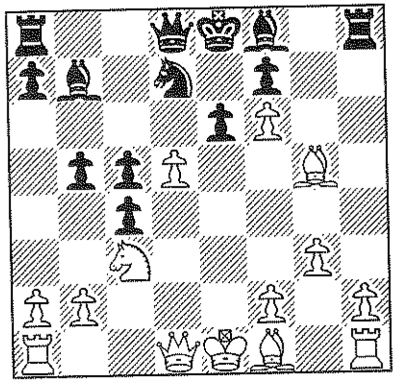
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 dxc4 6 e4! (6 a4 – *Volume 2, Game No.67*) **6...b5 7 e5** (7 a4 – *Volume 2, Game No.124*) **7...h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7**



11 exf6

If 11 g3 there can follow 11...♖g8 (11...b4? 12 ♘e4) 12 h4 ♖xg5 13 hxg5 ♘d5 14 g6 fxg6 15 ♕g4 ♕e7 with sharp play – for example, here Kramnik defeated Belyavsky with Black (Linares 1993) but lost to Shirov with White (Monaco rapidplay 2002).

11...♗b7 (11...♕b6 12 g3) **12 g3!** (12 ♗e2?! – *Volume 2, Game No.68*) **12...c5 13 d5**



'For roughly two weeks, at the risk of wasting precious time, I analysed this *tabiya* of the Botvinnik Variation when preparing for my match with Mecking (1977). The risk justified itself. One sleepless night, totally engrossed in the work, suddenly my heart literally skipped a beat: I had seized on an absolutely new idea. In the match it was not required and the piece of paper with my analysis stayed with me for more than four years!' (Polugayevsky)

13...♘b6?

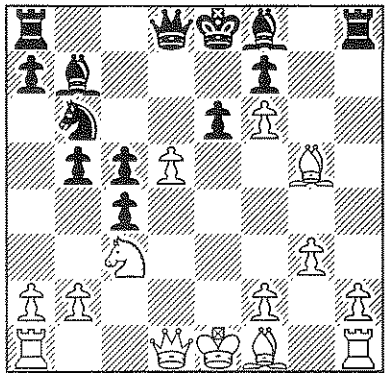
After the game this knight move was declared incorrect and was practically discarded. Instead they played 13...♗h6, 13...♘xf6 14 ♗g2 ♗e7 or 14...♗h6 15 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 16 0-0 0-0-0 17 ♘xb5... 1-0 (Kasparov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1994), but most often 13...♕b6 14 ♗g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 and now:

1) 16 ♘a4 ♕b5 (16...♕d6 17 ♗f4... 1-0 Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1996; the alternative is 16...♕a6!?) 17 a3, and now 17...♘b8 18 axb4 (as I defeated Timoshchenko and Dorfman in the 1981 USSR Championship), 17...♘e5?! 18 axb4! cxb4 19 ♕d4... 1-0 (Kamsky-Kramnik, 1st matchgame, New York 1994), or 17...exd5 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♗e3 ♘c5 20 ♕g4+ ♖d7 and here even 21 ♕g7!! is possible – the evaluation of this mind-boggling variation fluctuates from 1-0 (Ivanchuk-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1996) to 0-1 (Ponomariov-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 2003);

2) 16 ♖b1!? Uhlmann's old move, which sharply gathered pace after the game Kasparov-Kramnik (New York rapidplay 1994). Later it was played by Kramnik, Kamsky and Topalov. Here there is also great scope for creativity – and all this is the heritage of the great Botvinnik!

The current fashion is for 13...♕c7!? 14 ♗g2 b4 15 ♘b5?! ♕b6 16 dxe6 ♕xe6+ 17 ♗e3 (or 17 ♔f1 0-0-0!) 17...0-0-0 18 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 19 ♗xb7 ♔xb7 20 a3 ♕e4 21 ♔e2 ♗h6! 22 ♕b1 (22 ♘b5 ♘e5 and wins) 22...♕xb1 23 ♖hxb1 ♗xe3 24 ♔xe3 ♔xa7... 0-1 (Onischuk-Obodchuk, Poykovsky 2003). White's rating was 200 points higher, but in such wild positions the difference in the strength of the players is levelled out: one wrong move – and you can resign. Note there was a decisive result in all the games mentioned – this speaks for itself.

Therefore at that time they were afraid to play 5 ♗g5 (incidentally, also like the Polugayevsky Variation in the Sicilian), since no one wanted to delve into such a wild jungle. But Polugayevsky took up the challenge and made a serious step forward, demonstrating a *new, modern approach to the opening: if you want to gain an advantage in critical variations, you have to take a risk, and play concretely and sharply, move by move.* This was already a prototype of my match duels with Karpov and of the opening battles of the 1990s.



14 dxe6! ♕xd1+

Later they tried to defend with 14...♗xh1 15 e7! ♕d7 16 ♕xd7+ ♘xd7 17 ♘xb5 ♗xe7 18 fxe7 f6, but without particular success, for example: 19 ♗f4 ♔xe7 20 h4 ♗f3 21 ♗xc4 ♖hc8 22 ♖c1 with clear play against the weak c5-pawn (Ionov-Scherbakov, Rostov-on-Don 1993).

15 ♖xd1 ♗xh1 16 e7 a6

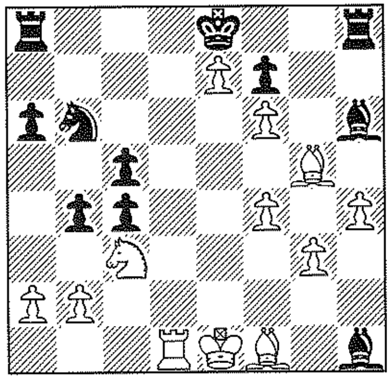
Of course, not 16...♗h6? 17 ♘xb5 ♘d5 (17...♖c8 18 ♘c7+! ♖xc7 19 ♖d8 mate) 18 ♗h3! ♘xe7 (otherwise 19 ♘d6 mate) 19 ♘c7+ ♔f8 20 fxe7+ with crushing threats.

But 16...♗c6!? 17 ♖d6 is interesting, and now not 17...♗d7? 18 ♘e4! (Bagirov), or 17...♖c8? 18 h4 ♗h6 (18...b4 19 ♗h3!) 19 f4! b4 20 ♗h3 ♖b8 21 ♖xc6 bxc3 22 bxc3 and wins (Burgess), but 17...b4! 18 ♖xc6 bxc3 19 bxc3! (after 19 ♖xb6 axb6 20 ♗xc4 both 20...♔d7 and 20...♗xe7 are quite good) 19...♖xh2 (Black also does not have clear equality after 19...♗h6 20 ♗h4! ♔d7 21 ♖xc5, or 20...♖c8 21 ♖d6! ♗f4 22 gxf4 ♖xh4 23 ♗g2! ♘d7 24 ♗c6 ♖xc6 25 ♖xc6 ♘xf6 26 ♖xf6 ♔xe7 27 ♖f5!) 20 exf8♕+ ♔xf8 21 ♗e3! with considerable compensation for the exchange, but by no means a win.

17 h4!!

Very fine! 'This innovation is perhaps the best that I have managed to find during the whole of my chess career.' (Polugayevsky) Earlier they played the automatic 17 exf8♕+ ♔xf8! 18 ♖d6 ♖b8 19 ♗e3 ♖h5! 20 ♗e2 ♖e5 21 ♔d2?! b4 22 ♘d1 ♔g8! (Plachetka-Bagirov, Berlin 1979), or 21 ♘d1 ♔g8 22 ♗f4 ♖ee8 23 ♘e3 ♗e4 24 f3 ♗g6 25 h4 ♖b7 26 g4 ♘a4 (Belyavsky-Bagirov, Moscow 1981), and in either case Black has good counterplay on the queenside.

17...♗h6 18 f4!! (by giving up a whole rook, White has created – directly in the spirit of Philidor – a rare pawn chain, paralysing the opponent's kingside) **18...b4**



19 ♖d6!

'This too is the result of that same home preparation (I have to admit that the position was analysed as far as move 30 of the present game). After 19 ♘b1 Black would have been alright, whereas now the knight gains the d1-square, from where it can immediately aim for the centre.' (Polugayevsky)

19...♖b8!

The best move, made after a long think. After 19...bxc3 20 ♖xb6 cxb2 (20...c2 21 ♔d2 ♔d7 22 ♗xc4 ♗e4 23 ♖xa6!) 21 ♗xc4 and ♖xb2 Black, according to Polugayevsky, loses on account of the weakness at f7 and the amazing helplessness of his rooks (say, 21...♗c6 22 ♖xb2 ♗d7 23 ♗xa6!, or 22...a5 23 ♖b5!); moreover, after placing his rook on the d-file, White can even exchange bishops and play a unique 'three-rook' endgame!

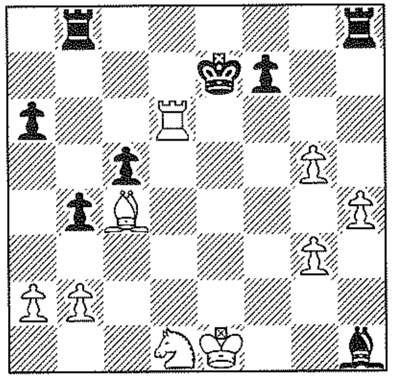
20 ♘d1 ♗xg5

The consequences of 20...♗e4!?, which is not mentioned by the commentators, should have been clarified. For example: 21 ♘e3 c3 22 ♗xa6 (not 22 bxc3?! bxc3 23 ♗xa6 ♘d7 24 a4 ♖b1+ 25 ♔f2 ♖b2+) 22...♘d7 23 ♘c4 cxb2 24 ♘xb2 ♗b1 25 ♖d1! ♗xa2 26 ♗c4!, and if 26...b3?, then 27 ♗b5! ♖xb5 28 ♘c4 and wins, while if 26...♗xg5 27 fxg5 b3, then 28 ♗f1 is good.

21 fxg5 ♘d5!

Preventing ♘e3 and planning the counter-sacrifice ...♘xe7. Inferior is 21...♗d5 22 ♘e3! ♗e6 (Black loses ignominiously after 22...♗e4 23 ♗g2! ♗xg2 24 ♘f5 ♖g8 25 ♘g7+ ♖xg7 26 ♖d8+! ♖xd8 27 exd8♕+ ♔xd8 28 fxg7 Burgess) 23 ♗g2 ♗d7 (otherwise ♗c6+ and an exotic mate with the knight at d6) 24 ♗e4 with the threat of ♘f5 (Polugayevsky), while if 24...c3 25 bxc3 bxc3, then 26 g6! is decisive.

22 ♗xc4 ♘xe7 23 fxe7 ♔xe7



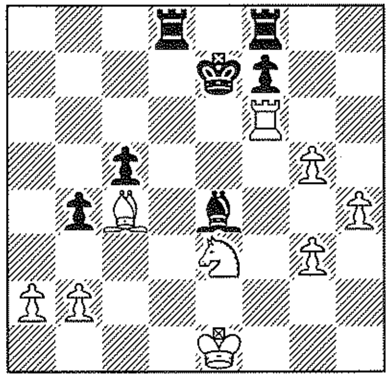
24 ♖f6!

'It is much more important to prevent the rook at h8 from coming into play, than to go after the a6-pawn.' (Polugayevsky) And indeed, the activation of his rook would have enabled Black to save the game: 24 ♖xa6 ♖he8 25 ♖f6 ♔f8+ 26 ♔f2 ♖e7 27 g6 ♖d8 28 ♘e3 ♖d2+ 29 ♔e1 ♖xb2 30 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 31 gxf7 ♗f3! (but not 31...♗e4? 32 ♘g4 ♗f5 33 ♘e5 Burgess) 32 g4 ♖h2 33 h5 ♗e4, halting the passed pawns, or 26 ♔f1!? ♖e7 27 ♘f2 ♗b7 28 h5 ♖be8! 29 ♔g1 (29 ♘d3 ♖d8!) 29...♖d8! 30 h6 ♗d5, also gaining a draw.

24...♖hf8 25 ♘e3! ♗e4 26 ♖xa6 ♖bd8 27 ♖f6

By this pretty pendulum manoeuvre with his rook, White has restored material equality and retained an obvious positional advantage.

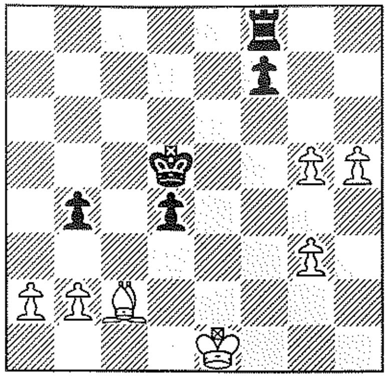
'27 h5 suggested itself (27...♗d3? 28 ♖a7+; 27...♖d6 28 ♖a5!), but at the board I refrained from this on account of 27...♖g8 *(? – G.K.)* 28 g6 fxg6 29 ♗xg8 ♖xg8, when the conversion of White's extra pawn could have proved a difficult matter.' (Polugayevsky) Alas, this is an oversight: after 29 ♖e6+! (Burgess) Black can resign. But after 27...♖d4! the conversion of the extra pawn would indeed have been difficult, for example: 28 g4 ♖e8! 29 ♖f6 ♔d8 30 ♔e2 ♖e5 31 ♖xf7 (or 31 ♗xf7 ♖xg5) 31...♖xg5 32 h6 ♖d7 with drawing chances.



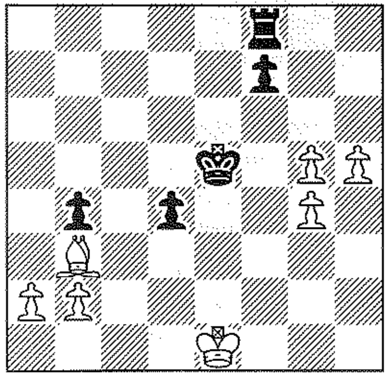
27...♖d6 28 ♖f4 ♖d4 29 h5 ♗d3! (a desperate attempt to disentangle himself) **30 ♘d5+! ♔d6 31 ♖xd4 cxd4 32 ♗b3?!**

Anxiety in the opponent's time-trouble. It was simpler to play 32 ♗xd3! ♔xd5 33 h6 followed by the activation of the king: 33...♖h8 34 ♔f2 ♔d6 35 ♔f3 ♔e7 36 ♔g4 f6 37 ♔h5, or 33...♖g8 34 h7 ♖h8 35 ♔d2 ♔d6 36 ♔c2 ♔e7 37 ♔b3 ♔f8 38 ♔xb4 ♔g7 39 ♔c4 and wins (Polugayevsky).

32...♗c2! 33 ♗xc2 ♔xd5



34 ♗b3+? (almost throwing away the win, which could have been achieved by 34 h6!, 35 h7 and the advance of the king) **34...♔e5 35 g4**



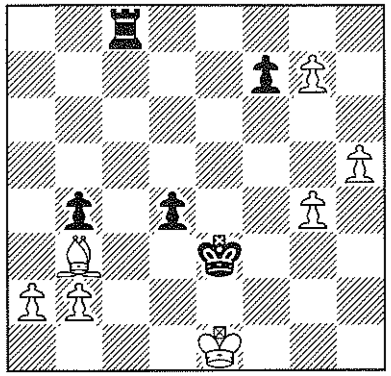
35...♔f4?

An error in reply. Black fails to make use of a chance opportunity – 35...d3!! 36 g6! (otherwise things are bad for White: 36 h6 ♔f4 37 ♗xf7 ♔e3!, 36 ♔f2 ♔f4!, 36 ♔d2 ♔d4! 37 g6? fxg6 38 hxg6 ♖f2+, or 37 h6 ♖e8 38 ♗d1 ♖e3 39 a3 bxa3 40 bxa3 ♖h3 and wins) 36...fxg6 37 hxg6 ♔f6 (Polugayevsky) with a dead draw: 38 ♗f7 ♖c8 39 ♔d2 ♖c2+ 40 ♔xd3 ♖xb2, or 38 ♔d2 ♖d8 (or 38...♔xg6 39 ♔xd3 ♔g5) 39 ♗f7 ♖d4 40 g5+ ♔g7 etc.

36 g6! ♔e3

It is over: 36...d3 37 ♔d2, 36...fxg6 37 hxg6 ♖e8+ 38 ♔d2 ♖e7 39 ♗f7! (Polugayevsky), or 36...♔g5 37 ♗xf7 ♔h6 38 g5+! (Burgess).

37 g7 ♖c8



38 ♔f1!

'38 h6 is also good enough.' (Polugayevsky) No, after 38...♖c1+ 39 ♗d1 d3 40 g8♕ d2+ 41 ♔f1 ♖xd1+ 42 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 43 ♔xg1 d1♕+ (Burgess) Black gives perpetual check.

38...d3 (38...♔f3 39 ♗d1+ and 40 h6) **39 ♔g2 ♔f4 40 h6 1-0 (time)**

Polugayevsky died in the summer of 1995 in Paris, where he had lived for the last few years, and he was buried in Montparnasse Cemetery, not far from Alekhine's grave. 'His prestige as a theoretician and teacher was incontestable,' the magazine *Shakhmaty v Rossii* wrote in memory of Polugayevsky. 'Chess character is usually a continuation of human character. With Lev Abramovich it was the other way round: while not being an heroic person by nature, he became a veritable lion at the chessboard. It appeared that he was fighting not only his opponents, but also with himself, spending additional efforts on each of his numerous victories. Perhaps, therefore, one cannot help feeling that with his wealth of ideas, understanding of chess and the creative content of his play, Polugayevsky could have hoped for even greater successes.'

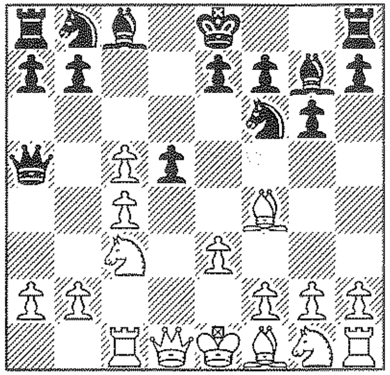
The Tiger wakes up

In his first cycle as an ex-champion, by defeating Hübner (+1=6) and Korchnoi (+1=9), Petrosian reached the final Candidates match, where he met the phenomenal Robert Fischer (Buenos Aires, autumn 1971). The American resembled a hurricane: before this he had won 18 successive games: 6-0 at the finish of the Interzonal, 6-0 in his match with Taimanov and 6-0 in his match with Larsen! And then in the first game of his match with Petrosian, after running into a strong piece of opening preparation, he accurately exploited his opponent's uncertain play and gained his 19th successive win (cf. Volume 4). It appeared that he could no longer be stopped, but here a miracle occurred: the 'tiger' woke up!

'When Petrosian resigned the first game,' wrote Viktor Baturinsky, the leader of the Soviet delegation, 'the spectators stood up and there was loud and lengthy applause. At this unpleasant moment we stood up together with the entire hall, experiencing bitterness and disappointment, on account not only of the defeat, but also the 'wasted' excellent opening innovation and the missed drawing chances in the endgame. But when, five days later, Fischer, pale and soaked in sweat, stopped the clocks and extended his hand to Tigran on the 32nd move, the ovation that burst out in the hall greatly exceeded in both strength and duration the one after the first game.' According to Petrosian, this was the greatest ovation he ever received anywhere...

Game 29
T.Petrosian-R.Fischer
Candidates Match,
Buenos Aires 1971, 2nd game
Grünfeld Defence D82

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♗f4 ♗g7 5 e3 c5 (5...0-0 – *Game No.12*) **6 dxc5 ♕a5 7 ♖c1**



7...♘e4

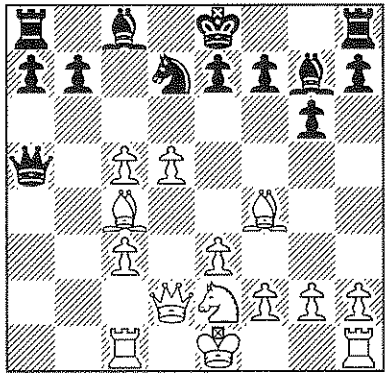
Since my third match with Karpov (1986) 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 0-0 9 ♘f3 ♕xc5 has been considered the simplest way to equalise.

8 cxd5 ♘xc3 9 ♕d2 (a recommendation of Boleslavsky) **9...♕xa2** (otherwise 10 ♘e2) **10 bxc3** (10 ♖xc3 0-0 with equality) **10...♕a5**

The experimental 10...♕xd2+ 11 ♔xd2 ♘d7 12 ♗b5 0-0 13 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 14 e4 f5 15 e5 e6 (or 15...♖c8 16 c4! ♖xc5 17 ♗e3 ♖a5 18 f4) is dangerous in view of 16 c4 ♖fc8 17 c6! bxc6 18 d6 (Karpov-Kasparov, 5th match-game, London/Leningrad 1986).

11 ♗c4 ♘d7 12 ♘e2

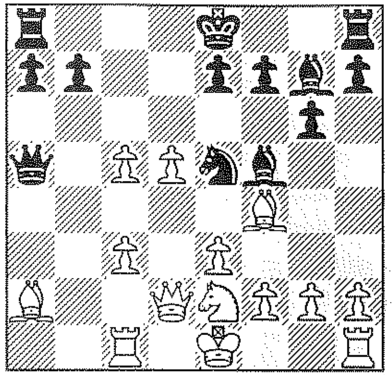
Subsequently White switched to 12 ♘f3!? ♘xc5 13 0-0 (or immediately 13 ♗e5) 13...0-0 14 ♗e5, but after the exchange on e5 and ...f7-f6 he rarely gained an advantage.



12...♘e5

In later years there were many games on the theme of 12...♘xc5! (12...♕xc5 13 ♗a2 ♘b6 is also interesting), for example: 13 0-0 0-0 (13...e5!?) 14 ♘d4 (14 f3 e5! 15 ♗g3 b5 16 ♗a2 ♕b6 17 ♔h1 a5 with equality, Rashkovsky-Mikhalchishin, USSR Cup 1984) 14...♗d7 15 ♖a1 (15 ♖fd1 ♖fc8) 15...♘e4! 16 ♕c2 ♕xc3 17 ♕xe4 ♕xc4 18 ♖ac1 (Malisauskas-Peelen, Groningen Open 1990), and here 18...f5 is the simplest way to equalise.

13 ♗a2 ♗f5?



An over-optimistic and extremely dubious move, especially against the background of the natural 13...♕xc5. However, one should take into account the fact that this complicated position, demanding deep analysis, was completely new at that time.

14 ♗xe5! (this is the whole point) **14...♗xe5 15 ♘d4! ♕xc5**

'Retreating the bishop with 15...♗d7 would have allowed White a great advantage after 16 c6! bxc6 17 dxc6 ♗c8 18 f4 ♗g7 19 0-0.' (Petrosian)

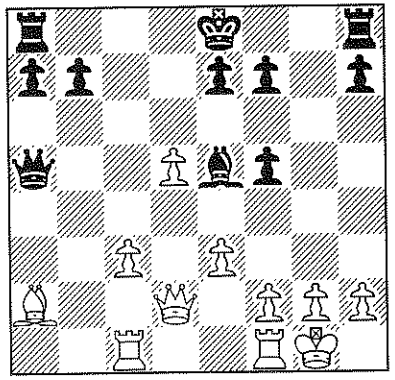
16 ♘xf5 gxf5 17 0-0

A critical point in the game. Black's position is rather unpleasant: his kingside pawns are broken and he has obvious problems with his king.

17...♕a5?

'The losing moment,' writes Mednis is his book *How to beat Bobby Fischer*. 'To voluntarily remove the queen from a good central square to a meaningless spot on the edge of the board, while losing a tempo to do it, is altogether incomprehensible. Black's immediate problems were the king's safety and the weak advanced f5-pawn. A logical approach, then, was 17...f4! 18 exf4 ♗d6 followed by queenside castling. White stands better, of course, but the win is far out in the woods.' I agree: although after 19 ♖fe1 0-0-0 20 ♖e4 ♔b8 21 g3 White has an obvious advantage, it is not so easy to breach Black's position. The main thing is that, at the cost of a pawn, he has blocked the white centre and defended himself against a direct attack.

From the practical, purely playing point of view, this would have been the most correct decision, but Fischer did not consider it to be forced! After nineteen successive wins, Bobby's sense of danger was, naturally, dulled. Being absolutely confident in himself, he underestimated the difficulties of the resulting position with opposite-coloured bishops and heavy pieces. In such situations, as is well known, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops often merely increases the attacking potential of the stronger side.



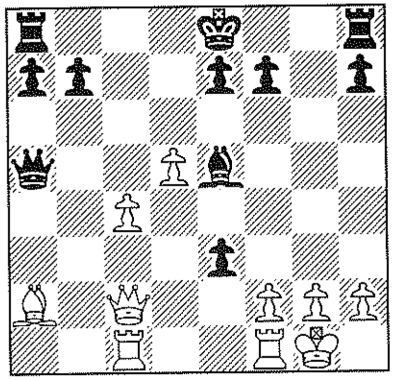
18 ♕c2! (of course, not 18 ♗b1 ♖c8; now, however, the weak c3-pawn threatens to become incredibly active) **18...f4**

Both 18...♗f6 19 ♗b3 ♖c8 20 c4 e6 21 c5 and 18...♖c8 19 ♕xf5 ♕c7 20 f4 ♗xc3 21 d6! exd6 22 ♗xf7+ were unfavourable for Black.

19 c4! fxe3!?

Again ultra-optimistic! 19...b6 would appear to be more tenacious, with the idea of 20 exf4 ♗xf4 21 ♖ce1 ♗d6 – this is similar to the variation in the note to 17...♕a5, but in a less favourable version for Black. There is no immediate win, the king can go to c7 and the bishop has a strong point, whereas in the game it is left practically without any squares and the king comes under the crossfire of all the pieces.

However, after 20 ♕e4! ♗d6 (20...♕xa2? 21 ♕xe5) 21 ♗b3! Black's defences begin to creak: 21...♕b4 (21...fxe3 22 fxe3!) 22 ♗c2 fxe3 (22...0-0-0? 23 ♖a1 and 24 ♖fb1) 23 fxe3 ♖c8 24 ♕g4!, or 21...0-0-0 22 ♕f5+ ♔b8 23 c5!! bxc5 24 exf4 ♕b4 25 ♗c4 ♔c7 26 ♕c2! and ♖b1 with a crushing attack.



20 c5!

Apparently Fischer did not expect such boldness from Petrosian. But the latter always played by the position, and in the given case White's attack is obviously worth a pawn! And whatever Black does now, he is faced with difficult problems.

20...♕d2 21 ♕a4+! ♔f8

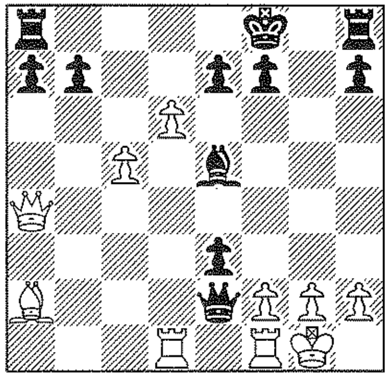
'Maybe 21...♔d8 was better.' (Mednis) No, this loses by force: 22 ♖cd1! exf2+ (22...e2 23 ♖xd2 ♗xh2+ 24 ♔xh2 exf1♕ 25 d6) 23 ♖xf2 ♕h6 (23...♗xh2+ 24 ♔f1 ♕h6 25 d6 exd6 26 ♖xf7) 24 d6 ♕xh2+ 25 ♔f1 exd6 (25...e6 26 ♕a5+ b6 27 cxb6) 26 ♖xf7 ♕h1+ 27 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 28 ♔f3.

22 ♖cd1!

'It could well be that the positional 22 ♖c2 was more effective.' (Mednis) This is true for the variation 22...e2? 23 ♖xd2 ♗xh2+ 24 ♔xh2 exf1♕ 25 d6 – with such a mighty bishop as the one at a2, White will usually give mate (Tal would not even have bothered to examine such a position). But after 22...exf2+! 23 ♔h1 ♕d4 24 ♖c4! ♕b2! (not 24...♕d3? 25 ♖xf2) 25 ♖e4 ♖g8 the situation is completely unclear.

22...♕e2 23 d6!

'The move was much acclaimed by the chess world; yet Petrosian himself later recommended 23 g3!' (Mednis) Indeed, this restricts Black's possibilities and after 23...♔g7 24 d6 his position is unenviable. However, the immediate breakthrough is also strong.



23...♕h5

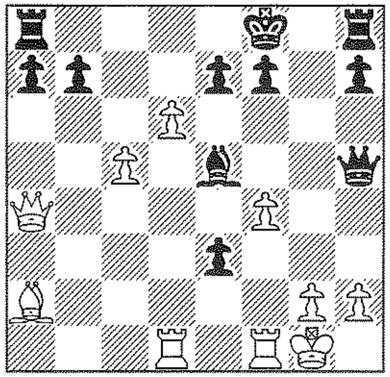
Black would have lost after 23...exf2+? 24 ♖xf2 ♗xh2+ 25 ♔xh2 ♕xf2 26 dxe7+ ♔g7 (26...♔xe7 27 ♖d7+ ♔f8 28 ♕c4! Kholmov) 27 ♕g4+ ♔f6 28 ♗xf7! etc.

For 30 years a question mark was also attached to the move in the game, based on an analysis by the Moscow candidate master I.Loktev. Fischer had supposedly overlooked 23...♗xh2+?! 24 ♔xh2 ♕h5+ 25 ♔g1 e2 with chances of a successful defence: 26 ♕d4 (26 ♖d3? ♕h1+!) 26...f6! (after 26...exf1♕+? 27 ♖xf1 f6 White wins with the subtle 28 ♖e1!! ♖e8 29 d7 ♖d8 30 ♖xe7!, and if 28...e5, then 29 ♕d5 with the threats of ♕xb7 and ♖e3) 27 ♖d3 exf1♕+ 28 ♔xf1 ♕h1+ 29 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 30 ♔d2 ♕g5+ 31 ♔d1 ♕h5+ 32 ♔c1 ♕g5+ 33 ♔c2 ♕f5!, or 26 dxe7+ ♔g7 27 ♖d5 *(? – G.K.)* 27...exf1♕+ 28 ♔xf1 ♕g6! 29 ♕d4+ f6 30 ♖d8 h5 31 ♕d7 ♔h6.

It stands to reason that it is hard for a human to assess all the consequences of these wild complications. But one only has to switch on the computer, and within a couple of minutes it finds a 'cast-iron' win, by playing in this last variation 27 ♖d4!! (a human automatically places the rook on d5; after all, it attacks the queen!) 27...exf1♕+ (27...♕h1+ 28 ♔xh1 exf1♕+ 29 ♔h2 h5 30 ♖f4) 28 ♔xf1 ♕h1+ (28...f5 29 ♖d7, or 28...♕e5 29 ♖g4+ ♔f6 30 ♖e4 ♕xc5 31 ♕b3) 29 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 30 ♖g4+ ♔f6 31 ♕f4+ ♔xe7 32 ♕d6+ ♔e8 33 f3 and wins.

Thus 23...♕h5 is in fact not worse, but better than 23...♗xh2?!

24 f4!



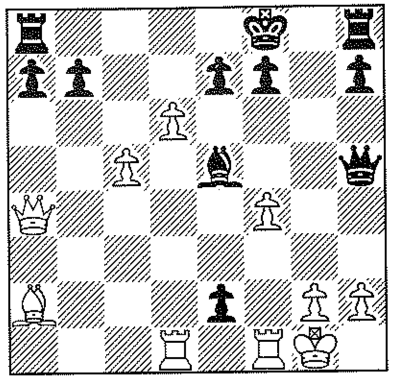
24...e2?

The final mistake. 'After 24...♗f6! Black's defensive resources would still have been very considerable.' (Kholmov) True, with 25 ♖d5! (Mednis) White would have retained a powerful attack, but literally computer-like accuracy would have been demanded of him:

1) 25...♕h4 26 dxe7+ ♔g7 (26...♗xe7? 27 ♖f5) 27 ♕d1! ♖he8 (27...♗xe7? 28 ♖h5 ♕f6 29 ♖g5+ ♔f8 30 ♕h5) 28 ♖h5 e2 29 ♕xe2 ♗d4+ 30 ♔h1 ♖xe7 31 ♕d1 ♕f6 32 ♗b1! and wins;

2) 25...♕g4 26 dxe7+ ♗xe7 27 ♖e1 ♖g8 28

♕e4 ♖e8 (28...♕g6 29 ♖f5! ♖g7 30 ♖xe3) 29 ♖e5! ♖g7 (29...♖g6? 30 ♕xb7; 29...♕g6 30 f5 ♕c6 31 ♗d5 ♕xc5 32 f6) 30 g3 ♕d7 31 ♖xe3 f6 32 ♗e6 ♕c6 (32...♕d2 33 ♗b3 ♕c1+ 34 ♔g2 and ♖e2) 33 ♕f5 ♖d8 34 ♗b3 ♖d2 35 ♗d5! ♕b5 (35...♕xc5 36 ♕xf6+!!) 36 ♖xe7 ♖d1+ 37 ♖e1 ♕xc5+ 38 ♔f1 ♕b5+ 39 ♖7e2 and wins.



25 fxe5! exd1♕ 26 ♖xd1 ♕xe5 27 ♖f1!

A catastrophe on f7.

27...f6

It is all over: 27...♕xc5+ 28 ♔h1 f6 (28...♔g7 29 ♕e4!) 29 ♕b3 ♕h5 30 ♕e6 (Kholmov), or 27...f5 28 ♕b3 e6 29 ♕xb7 ♖e8 (29...♕xc5+ 30 ♔h1 ♖e8 31 g4!) 30 ♕xa7 ♖g8 31 c6 ♕e4 32 g3, and 32...♕xc6 is not possible on account of 33 ♖xf5+! What a rout!

28 ♕b3 ♔g7 (28...e6 or 28...♔e8 – 29 ♕xb7) **29 ♕f7+ ♔h6 30 dxe7 f5** (after 30...♖a(h)g8 the simplest is 31 ♗b1) **31 ♖xf5 ♕d4+ 32 ♔h1 1-0**

The scores in the match were now equalised.

Fischer was clearly disheartened! In the 3rd game Petrosian missed good winning chances (see Volume 4), in the 4th and 5th he easily made two more draws, but then, as he put it, he either 'cracked or became tired' – and suffered four successive defeats. Nevertheless, Botvinnik commented: 'That which Petrosian did in the first five games is a great achievement. He showed that it is possible to play against Fischer. When Petrosian played like Petrosian, Fischer played like a very strong grandmaster, but when Petrosian began making mistakes, Fischer was transformed into a genius.'

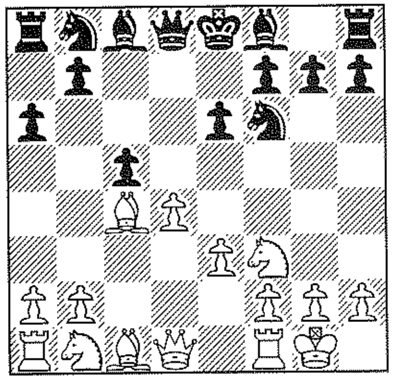
Just a month after this very difficult match Tigran Vartanovich took part in the Alekhine Memorial super-tournament (Moscow 1971): 1-2. Karpov and Stein – 11 out of 17; 3. Smyslov – 10½; 4-5. Petrosian and Tukmakov – 10; 6-7. Spassky and Tal – 9½; 8-10. Bronstein, R.Byrne and Hort – 9; 11. Korchnoi – 8½ etc. He conducted his game with the reigning world champion with particular verve.

Game 30
T.Petrosian-B.Spassky
Alekhine Memorial Tournament,
Moscow 1971, 6th round
Queen's Gambit Accepted D27

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

Spassky did not often play this. In the given instance he decided to force the opponent to fight against his own opening weapon.

3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 (4...♗g4 – *Game No.46*) **5 ♗xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6**

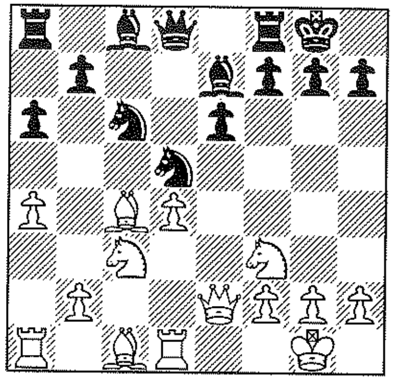


7 a4 (7 ♕e2 – *Volume 2, Game Nos.24 and 26*; the modern fashion is for 7 ♗b3!?) **7...♘c6 8 ♕e2 cxd4 9 ♖d1 ♗e7 10 exd4 0-0**

A *tabiya* of the Botvinnik-Petrosian match (Moscow 1963).

11 ♘c3 (11 ♗g5 ♘d5 with equality) **11...♘d5**

The alternative is 11...♘b4 12 ♗g5 (12 ♘e5 b6! 13 ♕f3 ♖a7!?) 12...♘fd5 (12...♘bd5 13 ♘e5!) 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 15 ♕e4 ♘d5 16 ♘e5 ♘f6 17 ♕f4 ♘d5 18 ♕e4 ♘f6 with equality (Reshevsky-Petrosian, Siegen Olympiad 1970), or 12...♗d7 13 ♘e5 (13 d5!? Botvinnik-Petrosian, 10th matchgame, Moscow 1963) 13...♖c8 14 ♖e1 (14 ♗b3!?) 14...♗e8! 15 ♖ad1 ♘fd5 with level chances (Bareev-Ivanchuk, Linares 1994).



12 ♕e4

A novelty! A weaker alternative is 12 ♘e5 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♘xe5 14 ♕xe5 ♗d6 with equality (Larsen-Spassky, Leiden 1970). But it is interesting that White also avoided the tempting continuation 12 ♗d3 ♘cb4 13 ♗b1 ♗d7 14 ♕e4 g6 (14...♘f6 15 ♕h4!) 15 ♘e5 ♗f6 16 ♕f3 ♗g7 17 ♕g3 (17 ♘e4!? Tal) 17...♗e8 18 h4! (Botvinnik-Petrosian, 16th matchgame, Moscow 1963). Why? Possibly on account of 13...b6!? 14 ♕e4 (14 a5 bxa5!) 14...g6 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♘e5 (16 ♕e5 ♗f8) 16...♗b7 17 ♕f3 f5 with an equal game (Nikolic-Petrosian, Vrsac 1981).

Nowadays 12 ♗b3! is preferred, for example: 12...♘cb4 13 ♘e5 or 12...♖e8 13 h4!? (Kramnik-Kasparov, 6th matchgame, London 2000).

12...♘cb4

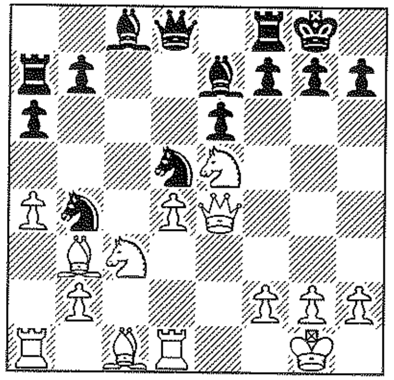
'In search of a complicated struggle.' (Kholmov) As was shown by later games, 12...♘f6!? 13 ♕h4 ♘d5 is sounder, when White has nothing better than to return to 14 ♕e4 ♘f6 15 ♕e2 ♘d5 and follow the lines indicated in the previous note.

13 ♘e5! ♖a7

If 13...♕d6, then 14 ♕g4 is good. 'Black can no longer develop normally: 13...b6 is met by the unpleasant 14 ♘c6,' writes Kholmov, who gives the following variations that are favourable for White: 14...♘xc3 15 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 16 bxc3 ♗b7 17 ♕g4 ♖fc8! 18 ♗g5! ♕f8 19 ♗xe6 ♖xc3 20 ♗d2!, or 14...♘xc6 15 ♘xd5 ♖a7 (15...♗b7 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 d5!; 15...exd5 16 ♗xd5 ♗g4 17 f3! ♘xd4?! 18 ♗e3! ♗f5 19 ♕xd4 etc.) 16 ♘xe7+ (16 ♗d3!? f5 17 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 18 ♕e2) 16...♘xe7 17 ♗g5 ♗b7 18 ♕h4! ♗d5 19 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♗xa6, winning a pawn.

I should add that the inferior 16 ♘f4?! ♘b4 allows Black equality (Milov-Spangenberg, Buenos Aires 1996) and that after 13...b6 there is a more promising line – 14 ♘xd5!? exd5 15 ♕f3 ♗e6 16 ♗b3 (Rashkovsky-Kupreichik, Minsk 1985).

14 ♗b3 (14 ♕g4 has also been tried, trying to provoke 14...f5)



14...♘f6

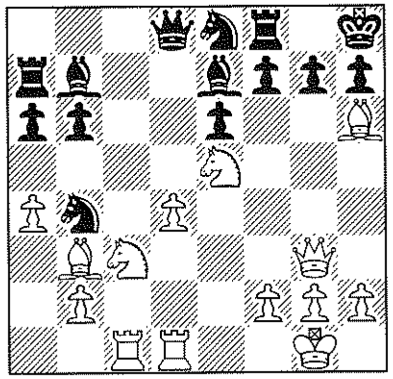
Driving the white queen to a good attacking position. 'For some reason Black avoids switching his rook along the seventh rank: 14...b6!? 15 ♘xd5 exd5 16 ♕f3 ♖c7 *(or first 16...♗e6 – G.K.)* 17 ♗f4 ♗e6 18 ♖ac1 ♗d6. White would certainly have retained some advantage, but how significant would it have been?' (Kholmov)

15 ♕h4 b6 16 ♕g3 ♗b7

This move was severely criticised, and wrongly so! Kotov and Kholmov recommended 16...♔h8, since nothing is given by 17 d5?! exd5 (18 ♘xd5? ♘fxd5 19 ♗xd5 ♘xd5! and if 20 ♘c6 there is the spectacular reply 20...♘c3!). However, in my opinion, after 17 ♗e3!? ♗b7 18 a5 White would have retained some pressure: 18...♘bd5 19 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 20 axb6 ♕xb6 (20...♘xb6 21 d5!; 20...♖a8 21 ♘a4!) 21 ♘d7 ♕xb2 22 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♘xf8 ♗xf8 24 ♖db1, or 18...♗d5 19 ♘xd5 ♘fxd5 20 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 21 axb6 ♖b7 22 ♕f3! f6 23 ♘c4! ♕xf3 24 gxf3.

17 ♗h6 ♘e8 (17...♘h5?! 18 ♕g4) **18 ♖ac1 ♔h8?**

And this is indeed a mistake, giving White a dangerous initiative. It was essential to blockade the d-pawn – 18...♘d5! (18...♗h4?! 19 ♕g4) 19 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5! (after 20 ♘c6 ♗xc6 21 ♖xc6 ♖d7! 22 ♗e3 ♘f6 Black has a solid position) 20...♕xd5 21 ♖c8 (21 ♘c6?! ♗d6 with equality) 21...♗f6 (21...♗d8 22 ♖dc1!) 22 ♘g4 ♗d8 with possibilities of mounting a defence.



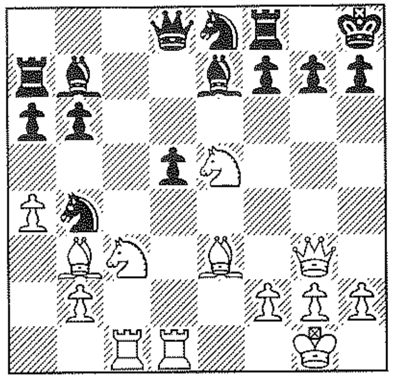
19 d5!!

A brilliant breakthrough! If 19 ♗e3 ♘f6 20 d5, then 20...exd5 21 a5 ♗c5 and the threat has been avoided.

19...exd5?

Perhaps the decisive error. It was also bad to play 19...gxh6? 20 dxe6 ♘d6 21 exf7! ♗g5 22 ♘c4 and wins. The only chance was 19...♘xd5 20 ♘xd5 exd5 21 ♗e3! ♗d6 (21...♘f6 22 a5; 21...♖a8 22 ♘c6!) 22 a5 ♕e7, although after 23 axb6! (this is clearer than 23 f4 ♘f6 24 axb6 ♖aa8 25 ♗d4) 23...♗xe5 (23...♖a8 24 ♗f4!) 24 f4 ♗xb2 25 bxa7 ♗xc1 26 ♗xc1 White has an obvious advantage.

20 ♗e3!



'With the threat of a4-a5. A classic example of Alekhine-like strategy. By diversionary operations on the kingside Petrosian has forced the black pieces to take up unfavourable positions, and now the decisive blow is landed on the queenside.' (Kholmov)

20...♖a8

Black's position is beginning to collapse. If 20...a5, then 21 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♘c6 (Kholmov), while after 20...♘f6 21 a5 ♗c5 White has the very strong move 22 ♘c4! (22 ♘a4!?) 22...♗xe3 (22...♗a8 23 ♘xb6) 23 ♕xe3 ♖e8 24 ♕xb6 ♕xb6 25 ♘xb6 etc.

21 ♘c4!

The weakness of the b6-square! Tigran Vartanovich unexpectedly and prettily attacks on that flank where there appeared to be nothing to attack. White regains his pawn and achieves a technically winning position: all his pieces are full of energy and coordinate ideally with one another.

21...♘d6

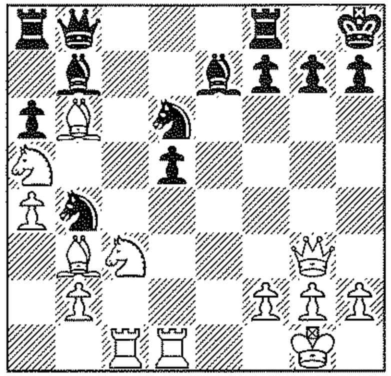
If 21...♗c5 there could have followed 22 ♘a5!, while if 21...dxc4 – 22 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♗xc4 ♘d6 24 ♗e2 and wins. But perhaps better chances would have been offered by 21...b5!? 22 ♘b6 ♗d6 and ...♖b8.

22 ♗xb6 (it was inaccurate to play 22 ♘xb6?! ♘f5! 23 ♕h3 ♘xe3 etc.) **22...♕b8**

'Many thought that 22...♕d7 was stronger. I think that after this 23 ♘e3! is the most dangerous, when Black remains a pawn down with insufficient counter-chances: 23...♖ac8 *(23...♕e6 24 ♘exd5! – G.K.)* 24 ♘exd5 ♘xd5 25 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♕c6 27 ♗d4! etc.' (Kholmov)

23 ♘a5

23 ♘e3!? also came into consideration.

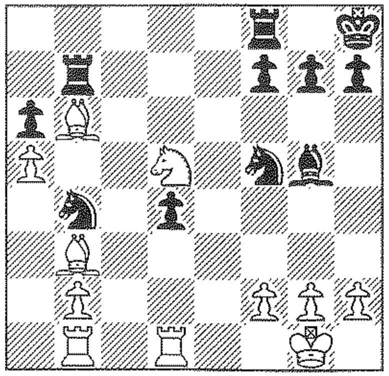


23...♘f5

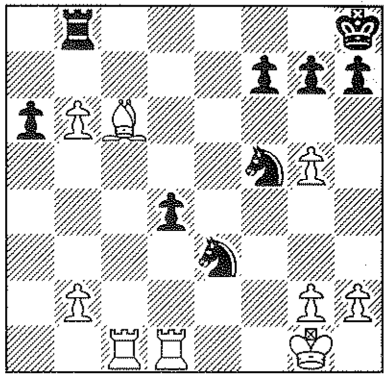
'By 23...♖c8! Black could have put up a tenacious resistance.' (Kholmov) But in my view, after 24 ♕f4! ♗f8 25 ♗e3 he has an extremely difficult position. In fact, 23...♗c8 was more tenacious, when White has a choice of two good moves: 24 ♗d4!? ♘f5 25 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 26 ♗e5, and 24 ♗c5 ♘f5 25 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 26 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 27 ♘c6 ♖b7 28 ♘xd5 ♗d6 29 ♘a5 ♖b8 30 ♗c2, and if 30...♖xb2?, then 31 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 32 ♘c4 and wins.

24 ♕xb8 ♖axb8 25 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 26 a5 ♗g5 27 ♖b1 d4 (27...♘e7 28 ♘xd5 ♘exd5 29 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 30 ♖xd5 and wins – Kholmov) **28 ♘d5!**

Black's temporary activity has died out and now things are completely hopeless for him. I should mention that, beginning with the move 19 d5!!, Petrosian's play is practically computer-like in character.



28...♘c6 (28...♘xd5 29 ♗xd5 ♖d7 30 ♗e4!) **29 ♗a4 ♖c8 30 f4 ♘ce7** (or 30...♗d8 31 ♖bc1!) **31 ♖bc1 ♖cb8 32 fxg5 ♘xd5 33 ♗c6 ♖xb6 34 axb6 ♘de3**



35 b7!

By returning the exchange, White forces the win.

35...♘xd1 36 ♖xd1 g6 (36...h5 37 gxh6!) **37 g4 ♘g7** (37...♘d6 38 ♖xd4 ♘xb7 39 ♖b4; 37...♘e7 38 ♗f3 ♔g7 39 ♖xd4 f5 40 gxf6+ ♔xf6 41 ♖a4) **38 ♖xd4 ♘e6 39 ♖d7 1-0**

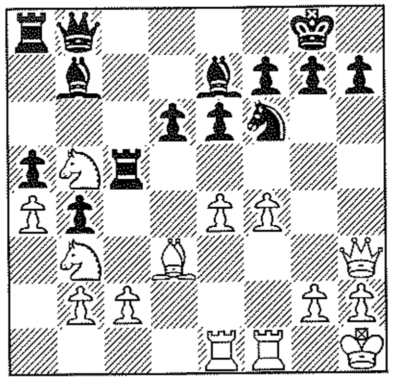
39...♘xg5 40 ♖c7, or 39...♔g8 40 ♗d5! ♘d8 41 ♖c7. A wonderful game, which in its time remained underrated.

In the same tournament Petrosian gained a fine win over Parma, by employing his well-tested weapon – the positional exchange sacrifice. This game was one of his favourites: 'In the Sicilian Defence an attack on the e4-pawn along the fourth rank from b4, c4 or even d4 is a fairly common phenomenon, but the idea that I was able to demonstrate here was of particular interest on account of its paradoxical nature.'

Game 31

B.Parma-T.Petrosian

Alekhine Memorial Tournament,
Moscow 1971, 9th round



21...♖h5!

Although forced (21...♖c8? 22 e5; 21...♖xb5? 22 axb5), this is a very cunning move: Black also intends to attack the e4-pawn with the 'cut-off' rook from h4.

22 ♕f3?!

Not guessing the opponent's idea. The correct move was the immediate 22 ♕g3! with a double-edged game, since in the event of 22...e5 23 f5 (23 ♘d2!?) 23...d5 24 ♘d2 White maintains his defences in the centre.

22...e5! (fixing the target of the attack – the e4-pawn) **23 f5?**

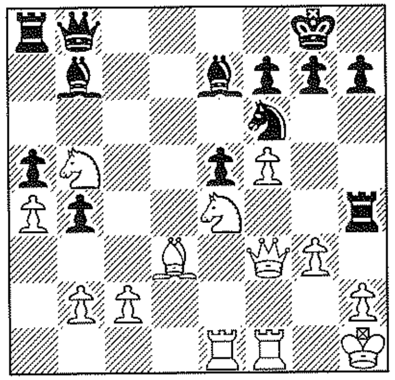
23 ♕g3! was essential, whereas after 23 ♘d2 both 23...♖h4 and the altogether exotic 23...♖f5!? were good.

I should add that the attempt to solve the problems by surgical means – 23 g4? ♖h4 24 fxe5 does not work on account of 24...d5!, when White's position crumbles: 25 ♕f2 ♖xg4 26 exf6 dxe4 27 fxe7 exd3+ 28 ♕f3 ♗xf3+ 29 ♖xf3 h5! 30 cxd3 ♕e8, or 25 ♕f5!? ♔h8! 26 ♖g1 (there is nothing better) 26...dxe4 27 ♗e2 g6 28 ♕f4 ♘h5!, and if the queen moves – 29...♕xe5. The rook at h4 is amazingly hard working!

23...d5! 24 ♘d2 (24 exd5? e4) **24...♖h4!**

'Of course, not 24...dxe4? 25 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 26 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♕xe4 when White has a strong knight at b5, he is attacking the e5-pawn and the rook at h5 is out of play.' (Petrosian)

25 g3 (a fatal weakening of the long diagonal, but if instead 25 exd5? e4) **25...dxe4 26 ♘xe4**



26...♖xe4! 27 ♖xe4

After 27 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 28 ♖xe4 ♗c6 and ...♕b7 Black, according to Petrosian, 'has strong pressure, the second bishop comes out to c5 and White's exchange advantage is not felt at all.'

27...♕d8 28 ♖fe1

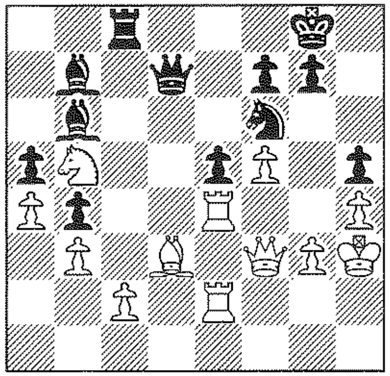
If 28 h3, then 28...♖c8 is again good, while if 28 ♔g2, then either 28...♕b6 and ...♖d8, or 28...♖c8 29 ♔h3 ♗xe4 (but not 29...♕d5? 30 ♖xe5!) 30 ♗xe4 ♖c4 and wins.

28...♖c8 29 ♖1e2?! (29 c3 ♕d5!) **29...♕d5?!**

The result of the time scramble. 29...♖c4! 30 ♗xc4 ♕d1+ 31 ♔g2 ♘xe4 32 ♖xe4 ♕xc2+ 33 ♕e2 ♗xe4+ would have won immediately.

30 b3 h6 (30...♗c5!?) **31 ♔g2 ♕d7 32 h3?! ♗c5 33 h4 h5 34 ♔h3 ♗b6**

'In my game with Portisch (*Game No.5*) it was a knight at c6 that was out of play, whereas here it is the knight at b5. On the decisive part of the battlefield Black has an overwhelming advantage in force.' (Petrosian)



35 ♔h2

'A time-trouble mistake,' explains Petrosian. But what should White play? If 35 ♖e1 or 35 ♖g2, then 35...g6! It is also bad to play 35 ♕f1 ♘xe4 36 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 37 ♖xe4 ♖xc2 38 ♖xe5 ♕d2!

35...g6 (35...♗xe4!? 36 ♗xe4 ♕d1, or 36 ♖xe4 ♕c6(d5) 37 ♔h3 ♖d8 and wins) **36 fxg6 ♘g4+ 37 ♔g2** (37 ♖xg4 ♗xf3 38 gxf7+ ♔xf7) **37...f5 0-1**

38 ♘d6 fxe4 39 ♕f7+ (39 ♗c4+ ♖xc4) 39...♕xf7 40 gxf7+ ♔f8 etc.

In the autumn of 1972, soon after the Fischer-Spassky match, the 20th World Olympiad was held in Skopje. Petrosian led the USSR team, which once again finished first. Altogether he took part in nine Olympiads and on each occasion he was a member of the winning team, playing four times on board 1! For comparison – Smyslov was a member of the winning team the same number of times (however, he never played on board 1), Tal and Kasparov each eight times, Keres seven, Botvinnik, Geller, Spassky, Polugayevsky and Karpov each six, Korchnoi five and Bronstein four.

Incidentally, in Skopje Petrosian suffered his first and only(!) defeat in all these Olympiads – against Hübner, whom he had beaten in a tough and controversial Candidates match the year before. He was so angered by this that, according to an eye-witness, 'in a fit of temper he almost knocked the chess clock off the table.' [Other reports suggest that this was because he lost on time and thought the flag had fallen early. – *Translator.*]

In his next 73 games the ex-world champion lost only once! Moreover, he shared first place in three successive international tournaments – in San Antonio, Las Palmas and Amsterdam, and then he performed confidently in the strongest USSR Championship of those times, the 41st (Moscow 1973): 1. Spassky – 11½ out of 17; 2-6. Karpov, Korchnoi, Kuzmin, Petrosian and Polugayevsky – 10½ etc. Here he inflicted the only defeat on one of his main rivals – the young Anatoly Karpov.

Game 32

T.Petrosian-A.Karpov

41st USSR Championship,
Moscow 1973, 8th round
Queen's Indian Defence E14

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 e3

This solid variation, leading to a complicated and non-forcing manoeuvring game, is not so popular as 4 g3 or 4 a3.

4...♗b7 5 ♘c3

Or 5 ♗d3 d5 6 b3 (*Volume 2, Game No.142*).

5...♗e7

An imperceptible inaccuracy. It is more appropriate to transpose into the Nimzo-Indian Defence – 5...♗b4, while if Black is intending ...d7-d5, it is better to play it immediately: 5...d5 6 cxd5 (if 6 ♗d3 Black equalises by 6...dxc4! 7 ♗xc4 ♘bd7 8 0-0 c5) 6...exd5 7 ♗b5+ c6 8 ♗d3 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 b3 ♘bd7 11 ♗b2 ♗d6 etc. (Gelfand-Karpov, 7th matchgame, Sanghi Nagar 1995).

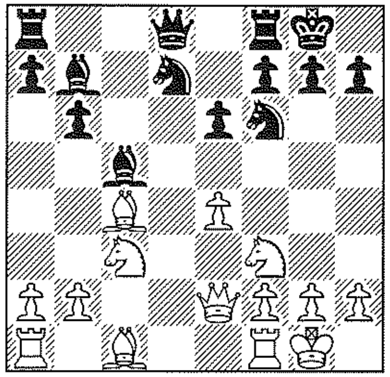
6 ♗d3 d5?! (this does not altogether fit in with his previous move) **7 0-0 0-0 8 ♕e2 c5**

Black's position is also slightly worse after 8...♘bd7 9 e4.

9 dxc5 dxc4

After 9...bxc5 10 ♖d1 White also retains some pressure. I think that Tal would certainly have played 9...bxc5, but Karpov prefers simplification.

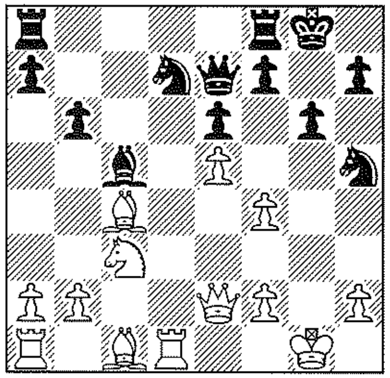
10 ♗xc4 ♗xc5 11 e4 ♘bd7



12 e5! ♗xf3

A rather bold decision. True, there was not a great deal of choice: if 12...♘g4, then 13 ♗f4, and the weakness of the e5-pawn cannot be exploited – 13...♕b8 14 ♖ad1 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♘gxe5? 16 ♖xd7 and wins. But if this is so, the knight at g4 is badly placed and after 13...♕c7 14 ♘b5 ♕b8 15 ♖ad1 a6 16 ♘d6 Black has a difficult position.

13 gxf3 ♘h5 14 ♖d1 ♕e7 15 f4 g6



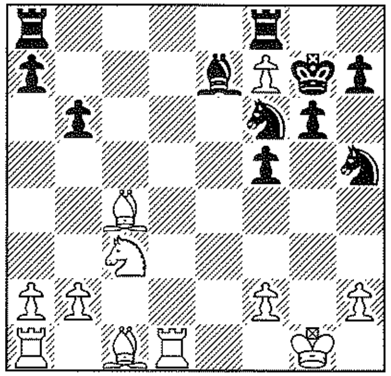
16 f5!

Very energetically played! Perhaps it made sense to include 16 a3 a5, but in principle it is hard for White to achieve anything without the f4-f5 breakthrough – say, 17 ♘e4 ♖fd8 and Black somehow holds on.

16...exf5 17 e6 ♘df6 18 exf7+

It was possible to win the exchange by 18 ♗h6!? ♘g4! 19 exf7+ (19 ♗xf8?! ♕h4! with a counterattack) 19...♖xf7 20 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 21 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♗d2, although it is not easy for White to convert his advantage after 22...♗c5 23 ♗e1 ♘e5. But Petrosian correctly calculated that the exchange would not run away from White.

18...♔g7 19 ♕xe7 ♗xe7



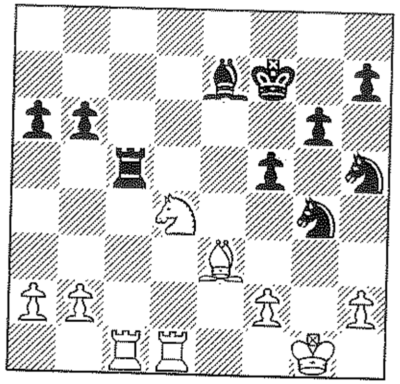
20 ♘b5! (this is an important manoeuvre) **20...♖ac8 21 ♗b3 a6**

21...♗c5!? is an interesting try, in order to initiate counterplay after 22 ♘xa7 ♖cd8 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♘c6 ♖c8 25 ♘e5 ♘e4 26 ♘d3 ♗d4. However, after 22 ♘d4! ♗xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♖cd8! 24 ♖a4! (only not 24 ♗e3?! f4 25 ♖ad1? fxe3 26 ♖xd8 e2 and wins) 24...♖d7 25 ♗e3 ♖fd8 26 ♖e1 f4 27 ♗d4! ♔f8! (if 27...♖xd4 28 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 the pretty 29 ♖e8! ♘d7 30 ♖d8 ♘hf6 31 f8♕+ ♘xf8 32 ♖xd4 is decisive) 28 ♗c3 White would have retained the advantage thanks to his two bishops and the strong pawn on f7.

22 ♘d4 ♖xf7 (forced in view of the threat of ♘e6) **23 ♗e3 ♘g4 24 ♗xf7**

After this obvious capture White has to overcome certain technical difficulties, whereas 24 ♘e6+! ♔h8 25 ♗xb6 would have created an overwhelming domination.

24...♔xf7 25 ♖ac1 ♖c5



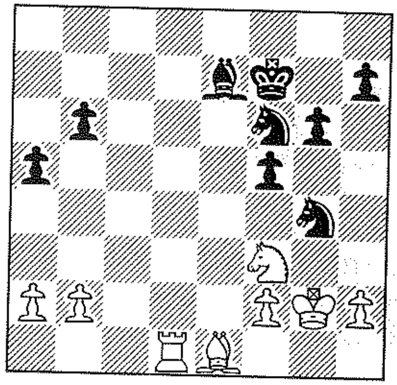
26 ♔g2?!

White should have retained his bishop – 26 ♗d2! ♗h4 27 ♗e1 ♘f4 28 ♖xc5 bxc5 29 ♘f3, hoping to convert the exchange advantage after 29...♗xf2+ 30 ♗xf2 ♘h3+ 31 ♔g2 ♘hxf2 32 ♖d7+ ♔e6 33 ♖xh7 ♘d3 34 ♖a7, or 29...♗f6 30 ♖d7+ (30 b3!? ♔e6 31 ♔f1) 30...♔e6(e8) 31 ♖xh7 ♗xb2 32 ♖a7 etc.

26...♘hf6?

The final mistake. Only the elimination of the white bishop – 26...♘xe3+! 27 fxe3 ♘f6 28 ♘c6 ♖xc1 29 ♖xc1 ♗c5 would have offered chances of a successful defence.

27 ♗d2! ♖d5 28 ♗e1 a5 29 ♘f3 ♖xd1 30 ♖xd1

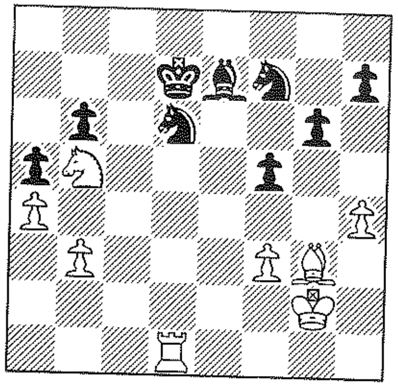


This is now a technically won position. Petrosian has subtly exploited his opponent's opening errors, playing creatively, with great force and inventiveness, and now with an 'iron hand' he converts his advantage into a win.

30...♘e4 31 ♘d2 ♘d6 32 b3 ♘e5 33 ♘b1 ♔e6 34 ♘c3 ♘ef7 35 f3! ♗d8 36 ♗f2 ♘c8 37 ♘b5 ♘cd6 38 ♘d4+ ♔d7 39 ♗g3 ♗e7 40 ♔f1 ♗f6 41 ♘b5

The sealed move. The conversion of the exchange for a pawn demands refined technique.

41...♗e7 42 h4! ♔e6 43 ♘d4+ ♔d7 44 ♔g2 ♗f6 45 ♘b5 ♗e7 46 a4



46...h6?! (46...♔e6 was somewhat more tenacious, although here too after 47 ♘c7+ ♔d7 48 ♘d5 ♗d8 49 h5 Black cannot save the game) **47 h5! gxh5**

Or 47...g5 48 ♗f2 ♔c6 49 ♖c1+ etc.

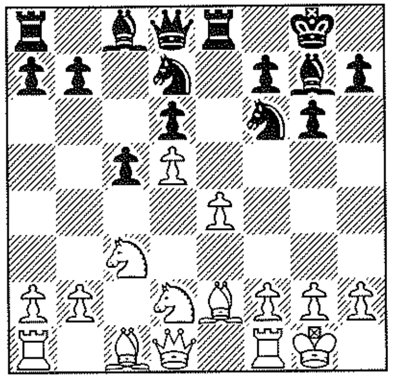
48 ♗f2 ♗d8 49 ♘d4! f4 50 ♘e2 ♔c6 51 ♘xf4 h4 52 ♘g6 ♘b7 53 f4 ♗f6 54 ♖c1+ ♘c5 55 ♔h3 ♘d6 56 ♗xc5 bxc5 57 ♘xh4 h5 58 ♘f3 ♔d5 59 ♖d1+ ♗d4 60 ♘d2 ♔e6 61 ♔g3 ♘f5+ 62 ♔f3 h4 63 ♘c4 ♗c3 64 ♔g4 ♗b4 65 ♖d3 1-0

A good game! 'The two players spent about seven hours at the board, not counting the time spent on analysing the adjourned position.' (from the press)

Petrosian demonstrated his great class in three further USSR Championships: he finished first in the 43rd (1975) and shared 3rd-4th places with Polugayevsky in the 44th (1976) and 45th (1977). In the following fighting game, which resounded throughout the chess world, he employed his favourite variation against the Modern Benoni and introduced a new word in what was then a highly topical opening discussion.

Game 33
T.Petrosian-N.Rashkovsky
44th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1976, 9th round
Modern Benoni A77

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 e4 ♗g7 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8 10 ♘d2 ♘bd7



11 a4!

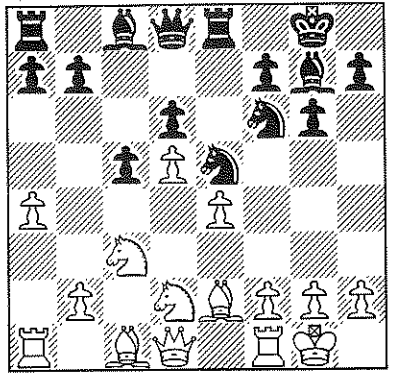
The most accurate move order. 11 ♕c2 allows Black a wider choice:

1) 11...♘h5!? 12 ♗xh5 gxh5 13 ♘c4 (it is better to play 13 b3 or 13 a4 with the idea of 13...♘e5 14 ♘d1!) 13...♘e5 14 ♘e3 ♕h4 15 ♗d2 (15 ♘e2!?) 15...♘g4 16 ♘xg4 hxg4 17 ♗f4 ♕f6 with a double-edged game (Spassky-Fischer, 3rd matchgame, Reykjavik 1972). Incidentally, the plan with ...♘h5 and the spoiling of Black's pawns after ♗xh5 first occurred a month before the match in the game Timman-Ljubojevic (Amsterdam 1972);

2) 11...♘b6! 12 ♗b5 (12 a4?! ♘fxd5! 13 exd5 ♗xc3; 12 ♖e1 ♘g4! and 13 h3? ♘xf2 is bad for White, while if 13 ♘f1, then 13...f5 with equality) 12...♗d7 13 a4 ♗xb5 14 ♘xb5 a6 15 ♘c3 ♘fd7 with equality (Polugayevsky-Mecking, 3rd matchgame, Lucerne 1977).

11...♘e5

Also after 11...a6 Petrosian successfully played 12 ♖a3!? – against Quinteros (Lone Pine 1976) and Lutikov (Moscow 1981): 12...♖b8 13 a5! etc.



12 ♖a3!?

Petrosian's patent move! Another classic exponent of this variation, grandmaster Gligoric, used to begin with 12 ♕c2, for example: 12...♘h5 (12...g5 13 ♘f3 – cf. Volume 4; 13 b3!?; 13 ♖a3!?) 13 ♗xh5 gxh5 14 ♘d1! ♕h4?! 15 ♘e3 (15 ♖a3!?) 15...♘g4 16 ♘xg4 hxg4 17 ♘c4 ♕f6? (17...g3!?) 18 ♗d2 ♕g6 19 ♗c3! with an obvious advantage (Gligoric-Kavalek, Skopje Olympiad 1972). It is better to play 14...b6! 15 ♖a3 (Gligoric-Taimanov, Leningrad Interzonal 1973) – it was for this controversial position that Rashkovsky was aiming, having prepared an interesting improvement.

12...b6!?

12...♗d7 13 ♕c2 ♖c8? 14 f4 ♘eg4 15 ♘c4 ♕e7 16 h3 favours White (Petrosian-Ljubojevic, Milan 1975). Black also does not equalise by 12...g5 13 ♕c2 a6 14 a5! (Petrosian-Lukin, Ordzhonikidze 1978) or 13...♘fd7 14 ♘d1! (Petrosian-Rajkovic, Vrsac 1981).

13 ♕c2 ♘h5!? (this audacious Fischer plan excited the minds of many players) **14 ♗xh5 gxh5 15 ♘d1!**

Play has nevertheless transposed into the Gligoric-Taimanov game.

15...♗a6!

The aforementioned game went 15...f5?! 16 exf5! ♗a6 17 ♘e4! (17 ♖e1? ♘c4) 17...♗xf1 18 ♔xf1 ♘f7 19 ♖g3! with a powerful attack. Now the exchange sacrifice looks more risky, but nevertheless...

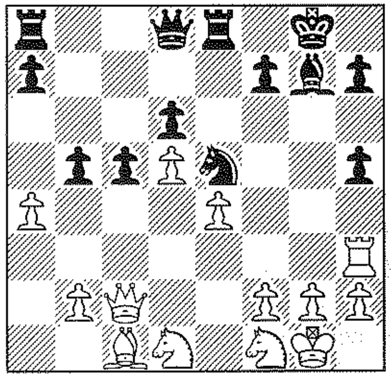
16 ♖h3!

A novelty. Before this another variation of the sacrifice had occurred – 16 ♘e3 (16 ♖e1?! f5! 17 exf5 ♘c4!) 16...♗xf1 17 ♘dxf1 ♔h8 18 ♘f5 h4 19 ♗f4 ♖g8 20 ♖h3 ♗f6 21 ♕e2 ♖g6 22 ♘1e3 ♕d7! with a sharp struggle (Plachetka-Sikora, Czechoslovakia 1974).

16...♗xf1 17 ♘xf1 (here Rashkovsky sank into thought for 80 minutes!) **17...b5?!**

Black hurries to open lines for his rooks on the queenside. 17...h4 would seem to be better, although this pawn will all the same be lost, when a white knight arrives at f5. Therefore Alexander Nikitin recommended 17...f5!? 18 exf5 h4.

However, it should be mentioned that in any case the chronic weakness of Black's kingside gives White excellent positional compensation for the exchange. And this theme, as we know, was Petrosian's favourite!



18 ♘de3!

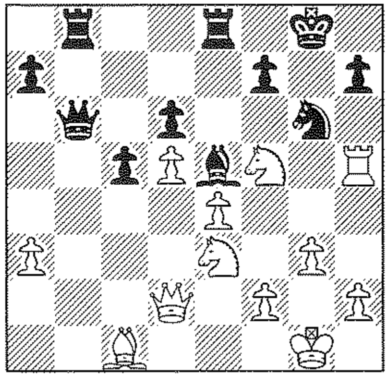
To f5 as quickly as possible! After 18 axb5 ♖b8 19 ♘c3 Black has the acceptable reply 19...h4!, but not Kholmov's variation 19...f5?! 20 exf5 *(20 ♖xb5!? fxe4 21 ♘xe4 – G.K.)* 20...♘g4 21 ♖xh5 (21 ♘e4 ♕e7) 21...♖e1 in view of 22 ♗d2! ♖a1 23 ♕e4 (23 ♖g5!?) 23...♘f6 24 ♕e6+ ♔h8 25 ♗g5 with an obvious advantage to White.

18...bxa4 19 ♘f5 ♘g6 20 ♖xh5 ♗e5 21 g3 ♖b8 22 ♘1e3 a3

Black has such an unpleasant position, that it is hard to say where he could have improved his play. Yudovich suggests the 'unclear' 22...♕a5, although after 23 ♘c4 ♕e1+ 24 ♔g2 ♖ed8 (the only move) 25 ♘h6+ ♔g7 26 ♗g5 ♖d7 27 ♘g4 White has a very strong attack – say, 27...a3 28 ♘cxe5 dxe5 29 ♗f6+ ♔g8 30 bxa3 ♖c7 (30...♖b1 31 ♘h6+ ♔f8 32 ♕xc5+) 31 d6 ♖d7 32 ♗xe5 and wins.

23 bxa3 ♕b6 24 ♕d2!

A very strong reply, after which Black can probably no longer save the game.



24...♕b3

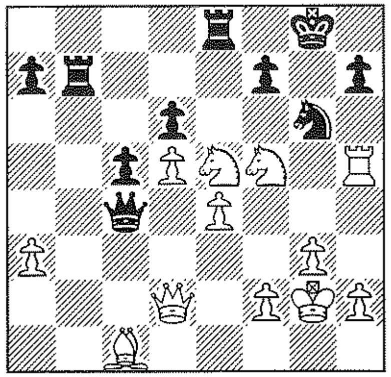
'24...♕b1 was essential,' writes Suetin, and Kholmov gives numerous variations, trying to demonstrate that this would have given sufficient counterplay. However, after 25 ♘c4! ♕xe4 26 ♘cxd6! (Yudovich's recommendation 26 ♕h6? ♖b1! 27 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 28 ♕h6+ ♔g8 29 ♘cxd6 is incorrect in view of 29...♕xd5 30 ♘xe8 ♕d1+ 31 ♔g2 ♖xc1 32 ♘e3 ♕h1+ 33 ♔h3 ♘f4+! 34 gxf4 ♕f3+ 35 ♔h4 ♕xf2+ 36 ♔g4 ♖g1+ 37 ♔f5 ♕xe3 38 ♖g5+ ♖xg5+ 39 ♕xg5+ ♔f8 40 fxe5 ♕d3+ with a spectacular draw) the black king stands very badly: 26...♗xd6 (26...♕a4 27 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 28 d6) 27 ♕h6 ♕e1+ 28 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 29 ♔h3 and wins.

25 ♘g4 ♖b7 (25...♗b2? 26 ♗xb2 ♕xb2 27 ♕xb2 ♖xb2 will not do in view of 28 ♘f6+ ♔f8 29 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 30 ♘f6+ and ♘xe8) **26**

♔g2! ♕c4

If 26...f6 Yudovich suggests 27 f4, ignoring the reply 27...♗c3! I would simply have played 27 ♘xd6! ♗xd6 28 ♘xf6+ ♔f8 (28...♔h8 29 ♕h6 ♘f8 30 ♘xe8) 29 ♕h6+ ♔e7 30 ♕xh7+ ♔d8 31 ♕xg6 and wins.

27 ♘xe5



27...♕xe4+

It was equally hopeless to play 27...dxe5 28 ♘d6, or 27...♘xe5 28 ♕g5+ ♘g6 29 ♕f6 ♕xe4+ 30 ♔h3 ♕e5 31 ♘h6+.

28 f3 (28 ♘f3 ♖b3 29 ♕h6! ♕xf3+ 30 ♔h3 would also have won) **28...♕xe5 29 ♘h6+ ♔f8 30 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 31 ♘g4 ♖ee7 1-0**

A complete game, in which Petrosian's evaluation of a very complicated position was deeper than his opponent's.

When Fischer, after becoming world champion, decided to restore the 'Steinitzian' formula of matches for the world crown – the first to win ten games (not counting draws), Tigran Vartanovich greeted this without enthusiasm: 'As is well known, Alekhine possessed an implacable chess character, but he had to play 34 games in order to win just six. There were 25 draws. Some 15 years ago, in order to win 10 games against me, you would have had to play six months.' Yes, Petrosian was able, like no one else, to extinguish the flame of the struggle, and his acute sense of danger was legendary. But what storms swept the chessboard, when the 'tiger' woke up!

Incidentally, at the insistence of Fischer, FIDE also decided that the Candidates matches should also be staged to a certain number of wins: quarter-finals – three wins (but with a limit of 16 games), semi-finals – four wins (20) and final – five wins (24). The most intriguing and hard-fought of the 1974 quarter-finals was Petrosian's match with Portisch – the most uncomfortable opponent for the ex-world champion.

The 'Hungarian Botvinnik'

On account of his strict positional style of play, the famous Hungarian grandmaster Lajos Portisch (born 1937) was sometimes compared either with Capablanca, or with Petrosian, but most often he was called the 'Hungarian Botvinnik'. True, Botvinnik himself considered such a comparison to be not altogether appropriate and at a tournament in Monte Carlo (1968) he endeavoured to demonstrate who was who (*Volume 2, Game No.80*). Nevertheless, Portisch was a participant in ten Candidates matches as well as a prominent theoretician, and his contribution to the development of chess is inestimable.

This is the right time to remember the rich traditions of the Hungarian chess school, the pride of which, beginning from the 19th century, comprises names such as Szén, Löwenthal, Kolisch, Gunsberg, Charousek, Maróczy and Breyer, from the 1930s – Lilienthal, Szabó and Barcza, from the late 1950s – Portisch (nine times winner of the national championship!) and after him Ribli, Adorján and Sax, and then also the modern stars led by Judit Polgar and Peter Leko. Hungary has long been one of the most important chess countries in the world, and it was no accident that they won the first two World Olympiads (1927 and 1928), as well as the 23rd (1978), breaking the long-standing hegemony of the Soviet Union. In that tournament Portisch, the permanent leader of Hungarian players, achieved the best result on his team – 10 out of 14.

From childhood Lajos not only played chess, but also studied the violin in a music school. Later he became interested in singing and he could certainly have made up an excellent duet with Smyslov, and the ideal accompanist for them would have been the well-known pianist Taimanov... But chess outweighed music, especially since Portisch's chess capabilities were obvious. At the age of 14 he was successful against the great Keres in a simultaneous display, after which the latter said: 'In the future I will be obliged to play this boy one-to-one.' And he was not mistaken!

In 1955 Portisch became a master, three years later – an international master, and after three further years – a grandmaster. At that time he had already showed himself to be a future top-class player, by gaining wins over Tal (Oberhausen 1961) and Petrosian (Bled 1961). And soon there also began the unprecedented epic of his battles to qualify for the Candidates: during the 31 years of his career he did not miss a single one out of twelve Interzonal tournaments! After Amsterdam (1964), albeit through by-passing Stein and Bronstein (for which FIDE took the 'credit'), he became a Candidate for the first time, but lost his quarter-final match to Tal.

The strength of his play increased literally not by the day, but by the hour, which is not surprising: he worked on chess for 6-7 hours a day. His outstanding capacity for work became legendary: it was said that Portisch analysed on free days, and on holidays, forgetting even about his beloved music. As his biographer József Hajtun writes, 'in this respect he is perhaps surpassed only by Fischer, who once said to Portisch: "I study chess so much that I am considered to be an idiot." But for Lajos such an evaluation would probably have sounded like a compliment.'

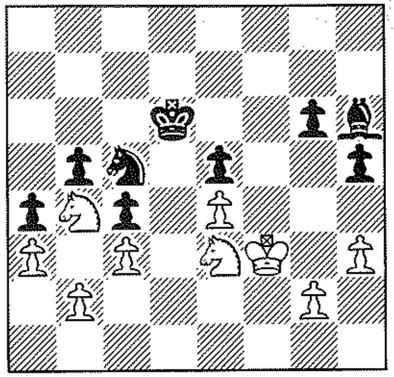
In a strong tournament in Zagreb (1965) Portisch finished behind Ivkov, Uhlmann and Petrosian, but ahead of Larsen, and he defeated all four in the individual games. Then came the double-round super-tournament in Santa Monica (1966), where Portisch finished behind Spassky, Fischer and Larsen, but ahead of Petrosian, whom he again defeated. He displayed his customary tact in explaining the champion's poor performance:

'Unfortunately, the critics forget: the world champion has not been transformed into a machine, he is also a human being, and not always in his best form. Usually the envious attack those whom they cannot even approach. But we chess players know that to become world champion is very difficult and that it is even more difficult to retain this title. Few of the champions have done this as convincingly as Petrosian recently did against Spassky. How to acquire one's best form at the time of a match is not known to us, but Petrosian succeeded in doing this. But after the match he, naturally, somewhat took his foot off the pedal... The event in Santa Monica can justly be compared with the AVRO tournament (1938). Then the same thing happened: the world champion Alekhine was unable to cope with his young opponents and he scored only 50 per cent. And yet many still regard Alekhine as the greatest chess player of all time. Petrosian's style – in contrast to Alekhine's – is unattractive to many, and possibly for this reason the critics want to see another champion "reigning over them".'

Lajos began the following year with a triumph in the Zonal tournament in Halle (+12=7) and the first win in his career over Spassky in a friendly match between the Russian Federation and Hungary. His very high reputation was also confirmed by the super-tournament in Moscow (1967), where Portisch succeeded in defeating Petrosian, Spassky, Tal, and Keres! The resumption of the last of these games, which was adjourned in a position that was difficult for Keres, was uncommonly fascinating and dramatic.

Game 34
P.Keres-L.Portisch
Moscow 1967

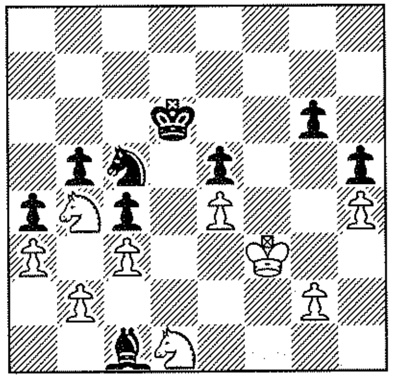
At first sight White seems to be lost: Black is threatening both the direct ...♘d3, winning the b2-pawn, as well as ...♘e6-g5+ or ...♘b3-d2+, winning the e4-pawn. But Keres found a study-like defence in his adjournment analysis:



45 h4! ♘d3 46 ♘d1 (46 ♘xd3? cxd3 and ...♔c5, winning) **46...♗c1 47 ♔e2! ♘c5**

It transpires that after 47...♘xb2? 48 ♘xb2 ♗xb2 49 ♔d2 ♗xa3 50 ♔c2 White has a fortress: 50...♗xb4 51 cxb4 and the remaining white pawns create an impenetrable barrier in front of the black king, or 50...g5 51 g3! ♔c5 52 ♘a6+ ♔b6 53 ♘b4 gxh4 54 gxh4 ♔a5 55 ♘c6+ ♔b6 56 ♘b4 with a draw. It is interesting that the computer does not see the draw and evaluates the position as '-+'. The concept of a 'fortress' is unknown to the computer, which simply recommends 47...♘xb2? Here we have one of the striking differences between a human and a silicon player!

48 ♔f3

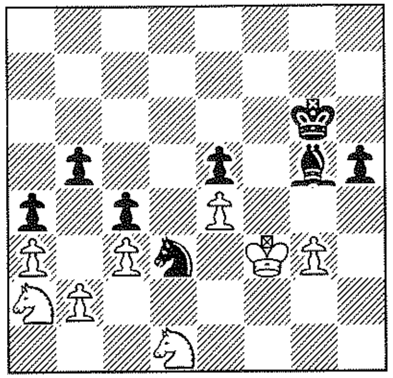


48...g5!

Realising that the b2-pawn is immune, Portisch begins carrying out a far more long-term plan, involving the breakthrough of the black king via the kingside to the e4-pawn.

49 hxg5 (not 49 g3? g4+ and ...♘xe4) **49...♗xg5 50 ♘a2 ♔e6!** (50...♘d3 51 ♔e2) **51 ♘f2 ♔f6 52 ♘d1 ♘d3 53 g3 ♔g6**

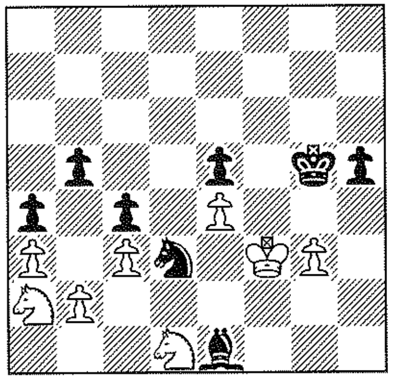
Giving the opponent the move.



54 ♔g2

If 54 ♔e2 Black would have won by 54...♘c1+ 55 ♘xc1 ♗xc1 56 ♔f3(f2) ♔g5 57 ♔g2 h4! 58 ♔h3 (58 gxh4+ is met by 58...♔f4!) 58...hxg3 59 ♔xg3 ♗f4+, when he unavoidably advances his king to h4, pushes back the white king from f3 and wins the e4-pawn: 60 ♔h3(f3) ♗d2! 61 ♔g3 ♗c1 62 ♔f3 ♔h4 etc.

54...♗d2 55 ♔f3 ♔g5 56 ♔e2 ♗e1! 57 ♔f3 ♗d2 58 ♔e2 ♗e1 59 ♔f3

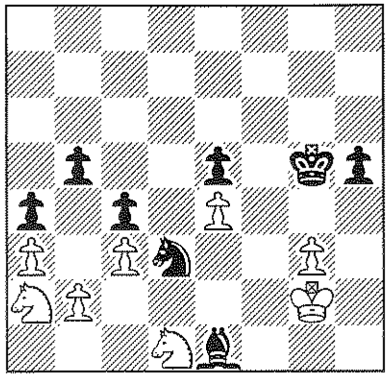


59...♔f6!

Subtle play. After repeating moves to gain time on the clock, with the help of triangulation Portisch prepares ...♔g5, in order to play this move only at a moment when White is forced to move his king to g2 in reply.

60 ♔g2 ♔g6! 61 ♔f3 ♔g5 62 ♔g2

It is no better to play 62 ♘b4 ♘xb4 63 cxb4 (63 axb4 ♗d2 64 ♔e2 ♗c1 65 ♔f3 ♗xb2!) 63...♗d2 64 ♔e2 in view of 64...♗c1 65 ♔f3 h4 (Black plays this as though it were a pawn endgame) 66 ♔g2 ♔h5 67 ♔h3 hxg3 68 ♔xg3 ♔g5 69 ♔f3 ♔h4 70 ♔e2 ♔g3 71 ♘c3 ♗xb2 72 ♘xb5 ♔f4, for example: 73 ♔d2 ♔xe4 74 ♔c2 ♗d4 or 73 ♘d6 ♗xa3 74 ♘xc4 ♗xb4 75 ♘b6 ♗c5! 76 ♘xa4 ♗d4! (cutting off the knight) 77 ♔d3 ♔f3 78 ♔d2 ♔xe4 and wins. A veritable little study!



62...h4! 63 gxh4+ ♔f4?

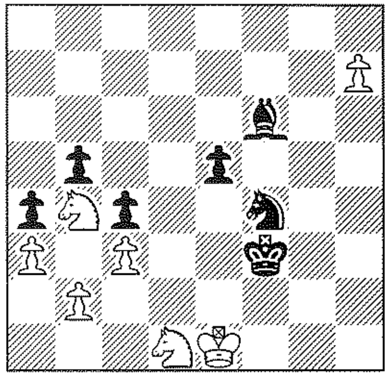
For some reason the commentators attached an exclamation mark to this move. But it bothered me: why leave White with his h-pawn, the advance of which gives him counterplay?

Especially as 63...♗xh4! would have won – the black king would have penetrated to f4 all the same: 64 ♔f3 ♘e1+ 65 ♔e3 ♔g4 66 ♘b4 ♘g2+ 67 ♔e2 ♘f4+ 68 ♔e3 ♗g5 69 ♘c6 ♘d3+ 70 ♔e2 ♔f4 71 ♘a7 ♔xe4 72 ♘xb5 (regaining the pawn does not save White – the weakness of the b2-pawn is decisive) 72...♘c1+ (72...♗e7!?) 73 ♔e1 ♔d3 74 ♘d6 ♔c2 75 ♘xc4 ♗h4+ 76 ♔f1 ♔xd1 77 ♘xe5 ♔c2, or 74 ♘f2+ ♔c2 75 ♘e4 (75 ♘d6 ♗h4!) 75...♗h4+ 76 ♔f1 ♘d3 77 ♔e2 ♘xb2 and wins.

64 h5 ♔xe4 65 h6 ♘f4+ 66 ♔f1 ♗h4 67 ♘b4 ♗f6 68 ♔e1 ♔f3

'The white knights are helpless and Black can now win a pawn.' (Hajtun) 'Black has accurately calculated that he will be able to stop the h-pawn, while the loss of the e4-pawn will be fatal for White.' (Shereshevsky) Well, let's see...

69 h7

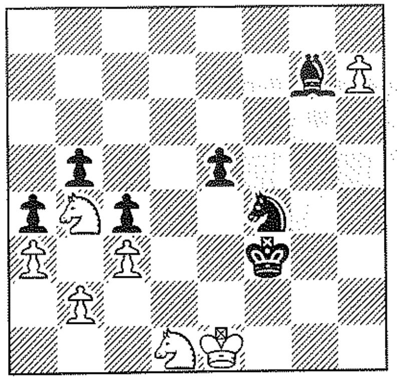


69...♗g7

An important moment, which the analysts fail to mention. It seems to me that, in view of the following comment, the best chance was 69...e4!? This would have been unlikely to win, but White would have had to find the correct defence:

1) 70 ♔d2 ♘e6 71 ♘d5 ♗e5 72 ♘e7 ♘f8 73 ♘c6 ♗g7 74 ♘d4+! (74 ♘a7? ♘xh7 75 ♘xb5 ♗h6+ 76 ♔e1 e3 77 ♘d4+ ♔e4 78 ♔e2 ♘f6 and wins) 74...♗xd4 75 cxd4 ♘xh7 76 d5 ♘f6 77 d6 e3+ 78 ♔e1! (78 ♘xe3 ♘e4+ and ...♘xd6) 78...♘e4!? (78...♔e4 79 ♘c3+ ♔d3 80 ♘xb5 ♔c2 81 ♘c3! with a draw) 79 d7 ♘c5 80 d8♕ ♘d3+ 81 ♕xd3 cxd3 82 ♘c3 with a draw;

2) 70 ♘c2 ♘e6 71 ♔f1 (inferior is 71 ♘de3?! ♘g5 72 ♘f5 ♘xh7) 71...♘g5(f8) 72 ♘d4+! ♗xd4 73 cxd4 ♘xh7 74 d5 ♘f6 75 d6 ♘d7 (otherwise 76 ♘c3) 76 ♔e1! ♘c5 77 ♘c3, gaining a draw.



70 ♘c2?

An extremely passive move, leading to the loss of the h-pawn and to defeat (apparently Keres was in time-trouble before the control on move 72). It is amazing that this blunder was not noticed by any of the commentators, and only Dolmatov in *ChessBase* recommends the more tenacious 70 ♘c6! ♘e6 'with advantage to Black'. But if this variation is continued for a couple of moves – 71 ♘a7! ♘c7 72 ♔d2 (or 72 ♘c6), it transpires that the position is a draw.

70...♘d5 71 ♔d2 ♘f6 72 ♘e1+ ♔e4 73 ♘f2+ ♔f5 74 ♘g2 ♘xh7

This nimble and voracious knight is also intending to eat up its 'favourite' b2-pawn!

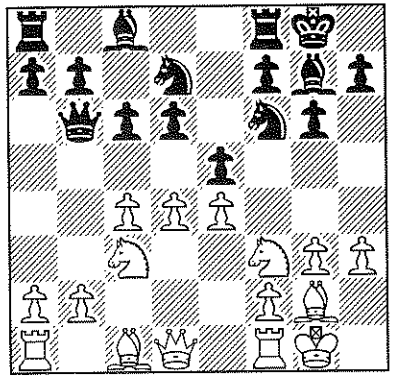
75 ♘e3+ ♔e6 76 ♘e4 ♗h6! 77 ♔e2 ♗xe3 78 ♔xe3 ♘f6 79 ♘g5+ ♔d5 80 ♔f3 ♘h5 81 ♘e4 ♘f4 82 ♘f6+ ♔c6 83 ♔e4 ♘d3 84 ♘g4 ♔d6 85 ♘h6 ♘xb2 86 ♘f7+ ♔c5 87 ♘xe5 ♘d1 88 ♘d7+ ♔d6 89 ♘f6 ♘xc3+ 90 ♔d4 ♘b1 0-1

There then followed a confident victory in the IBM tournament in Amsterdam (+5=6). It need hardly be said that, after all these successes, Portisch's chances in the forthcoming Interzonal tournament (Sousse 1967) were rated very highly. And he justified these hopes, playing evenly over the entire marathon distance and finishing in a qualifying fifth place.

One of the decisive encounters was his meeting in the 19th round with another favourite, the winner of the recent super-tournament in Moscow, Leonid Stein. The Hungarian grandmaster was in the leading group on '+6', whereas Stein was a point and a half behind, and the competitive situation dictated that he should play desperately for a win with the black pieces.

Game 35
L.Portisch-L.Stein
Interzonal Tournament,
Sousse 1967, 19th round
King's Indian Defence E69

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♗g2 d6 6 ♘c3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 c6 9 h3 (9 ♗e3 ♘g4 – *Volume 2, Game No.107*) **9...♕b6**



10 ♖e1

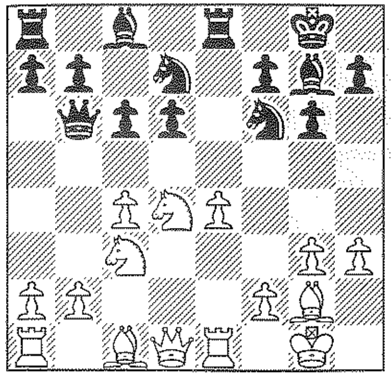
10 d5 (*Volume 2, Game No.128*) is the dream of any King's Indian player, but the most critical attempt to refute the queen move to b6 is 10 c5!? dxc5 11 dxe5 ♘e8 12 e6 fxe6 13 ♘g5 (Shirov-Kasparov, Linares 1993).

10...exd4

The 2nd round game between Portisch and Fischer went 10...♖e8 11 d5 (11 ♖e2!?) 11...♘c5 12 ♖b1 a5 13 ♗e3 ♕c7 14 ♗xc5?! dxc5 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♘a4 ♗f8 17 ♕b3 ♘h5! 18 ♕e3 ♕a7 19 h4 ♘g7 20 ♔h2 f6 21 ♗h3 ♗xh3 22 ♔xh3 ♘e6 with a comfortable game for Black, but 14 ♘d2 ♗d7 15 ♗f1 is better (Najdorf-Tal, 'Match of the Century' 1970).

11 ♘xd4 ♖e8

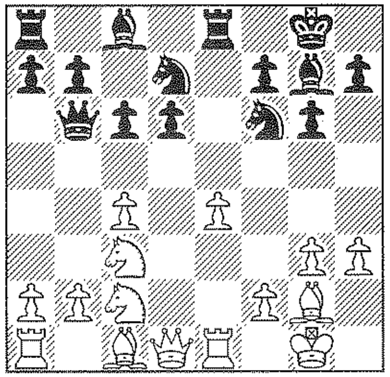
The traditional move. The alternative is 11...♘g4 12 ♘ce2! or 11...♘e8!? (Smyslov).



12 ♘c2

An interesting continuation, preventing ...♘g4. It is imprudent to play 12 ♖b1?! ♘g4! 13 ♘ce2 ♘ge5 14 ♕c2 (14 b3? ♘xc4) 14...♕b4 (Bielicki-Polugayevsky, Mar del Plata 1962).

A complicated struggle also results from 12 ♖e2 ♕b4 (12...♘g4 13 ♖d2 ♘ge5 14 b3 ♘c5 15 ♖c2!? Bagirov-Geller, Lvov Zonal 1978) 13 ♖c2 ♘c5 14 ♗d2 ♕b6 15 ♗e3 a5! (Lengyel-Geller, Budapest 1969), or 12 ♘b3 ♘e5 13 ♗e3 c5! 14 ♗f1 ♗e6 15 ♘d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♘e4 17 ♔g2 f5 18 ♕c2 ♘f7 19 ♗d3 ♖e7 20 ♖e2 ♖ae8 21 ♖ae1 ♕a6 22 ♘c1 ♘f6 with equality (Epishin-Kasparov, Moscow rapidplay 1995).

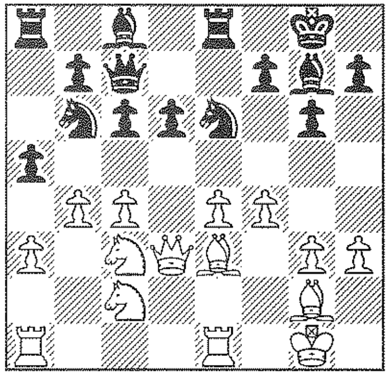


12...♘c5

Black can also consider 12...♘e5!? 13 b3 (13 ♗e3 ♕a5) 13...♗e6 14 ♗e3 ♕a5 and ...♖ad8 with approximate equality (Geller).

13 b4! (13 ♖b1?! ♘g4!) **13...♘e6 14 ♗e3 ♕c7 15 ♕d3 a5 16 a3 ♘d7 17 f4 ♘b6!**

A subtle tactical resource. 17...axb4?! 18 axb4 ♖xa1 19 ♖xa1 would have been premature.



18 ♖ad1

To avoid the following simplification Portisch recommended 18 ♖ed1!? 'with advantage to White'. Indeed, after 18...axb4 19 axb4 ♖xa1 20 ♖xa1 he would occupy the a-file. However, on account of the rook's departure from e1, Black would have acquired another active possibility – 20...f5! 21 ♖a3 (21 exf5 ♘xf4! and ...♗xf5, advantageously regaining the material; 21 ♖d1 fxe4 22 ♘xe4 ♘xc4! 23 ♕xc4 d5 with equality) 21...fxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖d8, for example:

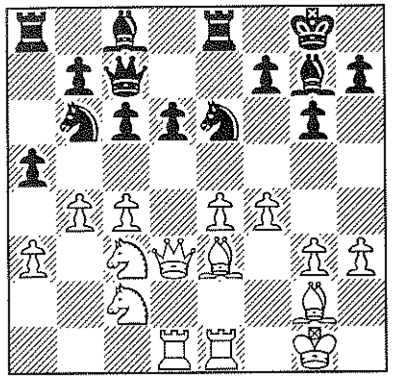
1) 23 ♗g2 d5! 24 cxd5 ♘xd5 25 ♘xd5 cxd5;

2) 23 ♔h2 d5! 24 cxd5 (24 ♗xb6?! ♕xb6 25 cxd5 is refuted by 25...♕f2+ 26 ♗g2 ♘xf4! 27 gxf4 ♗f5) 24...♘xd5 25 ♘xd5 cxd5 26 ♗g2 d4 and the passed d-pawn gives Black considerable counterplay;

3) 23 ♔g2 ♘xc4! (but not now 23...d5?! 24 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 25 cxd5 etc.) 24 ♕xc4 d5 25 ♗xd5!? cxd5 26 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 27 ♗b6! ♗f5! 28 ♘e3! (28 ♗xc7 ♖d7! 29 ♘e3 ♗xc3 30 ♖xc3 d4 31 ♖c5 dxe3 32 ♔f3 ♗xh3 33 ♔xe3 ♗f5

with equality) 28...♖a8! 29 ♖xa8+ (if 29 ♖b3? there is the fantastic 29...d4! 30 ♘xf5 dxc3 31 ♘xg7 c2!! 32 ♖c3 ♖a2 33 ♗f2 ♘d5 34 ♖c5 ♔xg7 35 b5 ♔h6, winning) 29...♘xa8 30 ♘cxd5 (30 ♘xf5 ♗xc3 31 ♘e7+ ♔f7 32 ♘xd5 ♗xb4 33 ♗d4 ♗d6 with equality) 30...♗e4+ 31 ♔f1 ♘xb6 32 ♘xb6 ♗f8! 33 Nb(e)d5 ♔f7 34 ♔e2 ♗xd5! 35 ♘xd5 ♔e6, capturing on b4 with a draw.

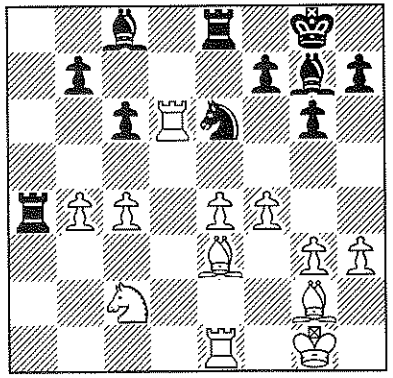
Some amazingly beautiful computer variations, in which one black knight strikes a blow at f4, and the other at c4.



18...axb4! 19 axb4 ♘a4!

Only by sacrificing a pawn does Black 'retain sufficient chances to maintain the balance.' (Geller)

20 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 21 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♖xd6



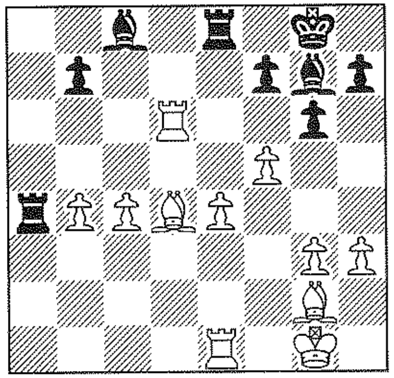
22...c5!

'Stein has excellently managed to complicate matters. He had to foresee that 22...♗f8 would not do on account of 23 ♖d2 ♗xb4 24 ♘xb4 ♖xb4 25 f5.' (Hajtun) This variation is also given in *Informator* by Portisch. However, after 25...gxf5 26 exf5 ♘f8! White loses one of his pawns and his entire advantage. In my opinion, 25 ♖c1! is more promising, condemning Black to a gruelling defence.

23 f5

The commentators overlooked an interesting attempt to retain the extra pawn – 23 ♖b1!? After this there could have followed 23...♗f8! 24 ♖b6 ♖a2 25 ♖c1 ♖a4!? (it is dangerous to play 25...♖d8 26 ♗f1!) 26 e5! (26 bxc5 ♘xc5 with equality; 26 f5 gxf5 27 exf5 ♘d4! with sharp play) 26...cxb4 27 ♖d1 h5! (with the idea of ...h5-h4, ...b4-b3 and ...♖xc4) 28 h4 b3 29 ♖xb3 ♖xc4 30 ♘a3 ♖a4 31 ♘b5 ♘c5 32 ♖b2 ♗g4, or 27 ♖b1 b3 28 ♖6xb3 (28 ♘a1 ♖xc4 29 ♘xb3 ♖c3 30 ♔f2 ♖d8!) 28...♖xc4 29 ♘a3 ♖a4 30 ♘b5 ♘c5 31 ♘c3 ♖c4 32 ♗d5 ♘xb3 33 ♗xc4 ♘a5, nevertheless reaching the haven of a draw.

23...♘d4! 24 ♘xd4 cxd4 25 ♗xd4



25...♗f8?!

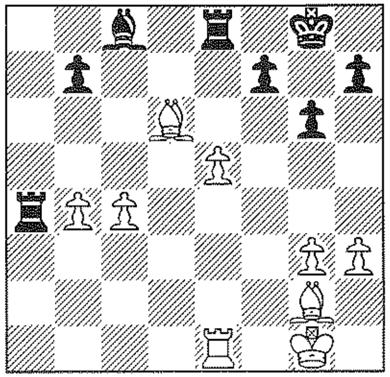
A not altogether understandable, nervy decision. Stein rejects the easy draw after 25...♗xd4+ 26 ♖xd4 ♖xb4 27 fxg6 (27 f6 b5!) 27...hxg6 28 e5 ♗e6 29 ♖f4 (29 ♖ee4 ♖a8!) 29...g5 30 ♖fe4 (30 ♖f2 ♖xc4) 30...♖c8 31 ♗f1 ♔g7 32 h4 ♗f5 33 ♖4e3 (33 ♖d4 b5) 33...♗e6, evidently aiming to complicate the play somehow, but now Black is condemned to fighting only for a draw all the same.

26 ♗c5!

The exclamation mark is not so much for boldness (White is not risking anything), as for psychological insight: although objectively this exchange sacrifice does not set Black serious problems, Stein now has to engage in his least favourite occupation – painstaking defence!

After the unsophisticated 26 ♖d5 Black could evidently have held the game, despite being a pawn down: 26...gxf5 (it is weaker to play 26...♗xb4?! 27 ♖d1 or 26...♗xf5?! 27 ♖b5 ♗c8 28 c5) 27 ♖b1 ♗e6 28 ♖b5! (28 ♖a5 ♖xb4 or 28 c5 b6! 29 cxb6 ♗xd5 30 exd5 ♖xb4 leads to equality) 28...♗xc4 29 ♖xf5 h6! 30 ♖f4 (30 ♖a5 b5) 30...♗e6! 31 ♗c5 ♗g7 etc.

26...♗xf5 27 e5 ♗xd6 28 ♗xd6 ♗c8



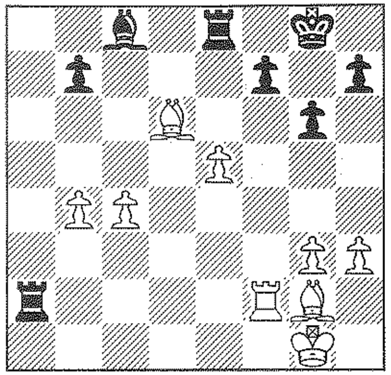
It was for the sake of this position that Portisch gave up the exchange: the powerful white bishops are ready to support the dangerous passed pawn that is about to appear on the queenside.

29 ♖f1 (threatening 30 ♗d5 ♗e6 31 ♗xb7; 29 g4!?) **29...♖a2**

If 29...♖a3 (with the idea of 30 ♗d5 ♗e6 with equality, or 30 ♔h2 ♖a2! Hajtun), then 30 g4!? is quite good. The move in the game looks even more logical.

30 ♖f2

The attempt 30 ♗d5 ♗e6 31 ♗xb7 can now be parried by 31...♗xc4 32 ♖f2 ♖xf2 33 ♔xf2 ♖d8 34 ♗c6 f6! 35 b5 fxe5 36 ♗xe5 ♗d5 with a draw, while if 30 c5 (30 g4 h5!?), then 30...♖b2 31 ♗d5 (31 c6 bxc6 32 ♗xc6 ♖d8 33 b5 ♗xh3) 31...♗e6 32 ♗xb7 ♖xb4 33 ♗g2 (33 c6 ♖b6 34 g4 ♗d5) 33...♖c4 34 ♖b1 ♖c8 and Black neutralises the c-pawn.



30...♖a1+

Again playing for complications – surely Stein wasn't really thinking about winning? A draw could have been achieved fairly simply – after 30...♖xf2!? 31 ♔xf2 ♔g7 32 ♔e3 f6! (a timely undermining move) 33 ♔d4 fxe5+ 34 ♗xe5+ ♔f7 he would have had to give up rook for bishop at a convenient moment: 35 b5 (35 ♗d5+ ♗e6 36 ♗xb7 ♗xc4 37 ♗c6 ♖c8 38 b5 ♗e6) 35...♖d8+ 36 ♔c5 ♖d2 37 ♗d5+ ♖xd5+ 38 cxd5 ♗xh3 39 ♔b6 ♗d7.

31 ♔h2 b6 (31...♖b1!?) **32 ♗c6** (32 c5 bxc5 33 bxc5 ♖c1 34 c6 ♗e6 and ...♖c8 with a draw) **32...♖d8 33 b5!?**

After 33 c5 bxc5 34 bxc5 again 34...♖c1 is sufficient, for example: 35 ♗e7 ♖d3 36 ♗g2 h6 37 ♖b2 ♔h7 38 g4 ♖e3 39 ♗d6 ♖ec3 40 c6 ♖xc6 41 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 42 ♗e7 g5 43 ♗f6 ♔g6 with a draw.

As we see, although Black is squeezed by the bishops, the position is still drawish. However, here a severe time scramble interferes.

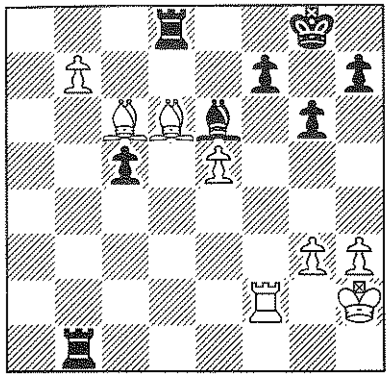
33...♗e6 34 c5

Portisch recommends the unhurried 34 ♖c2 'with advantage' (Hajtun writes that this move 'would have promised a certain win'), but after 34...♖b1! Black's defences are solid. Also, nothing would have been achieved by 34 ♗c7 ♖c8 35 ♗xb6 ♗xc4 36 ♖b2 ♖e1 37

♗d4 ♖d8 38 ♗c3 ♖e3 39 ♗a5 ♖dd3 40 b6 ♖b3.

34...bxc5 35 b6 ♖b1 36 b7

The culminating moment of the battle.



36...c4??

A time-trouble blunder. There was even more than one way to gain a simple draw, for example: 36...♗c4 (Portisch) 37 ♗c7 ♖f8 38 ♗e4 ♖b3 39 ♖c2 ♗a6, or 36...♔g7 (Fritz) 37 ♗e4 ♖b3 38 ♗xc5 ♖d7.

37 ♖a2! (Stein obviously overlooked this rejoinder) **37...♔g7 38 ♖a8?**

This obvious, self-apparent move is an error in reply. White could have won by 38 ♗e4! ♖b3 (38...c3 39 ♗xb1 ♗xa2 40 ♗xa2 c2 41 ♗a3 ♖b8 42 ♗d5) 39 ♖a8! ♖b2+ 40 ♔g1 ♖g8 41 ♖xg8+ (41 g4!?) 41...♔xg8 42 b8♕+ ♖xb8 43 ♗xb8 ♗xh3 44 ♔f2 etc. Now, however, Black unexpectedly gains counterplay and the situation becomes sharper.

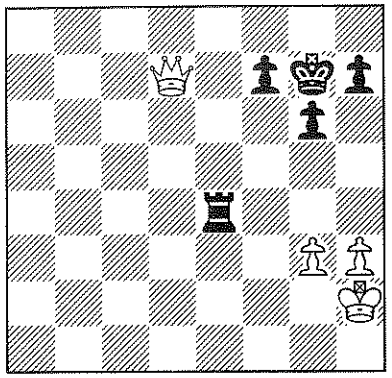
38...♖xd6 39 exd6 c3 40 ♖a5

Of course, not 40 b8♕?? ♖xb8 41 ♖xb8 c2 and wins. After 40 ♖a3, as in the game, it is bad to play 40...♖b2+? 41 ♔g1 c2 42 ♖c3, so 40...c2! 41 ♖c3 c1♕ 42 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 is essential.

40...♖b2+?

The ill-fated last move before the time control! It was essential to play 40...c2! 41 ♖c5 c1♕ 42 ♖xc1 ♖xc1, when 43 ♗b5?? fails to 43...♗d5! (with the threat of ...♖h1 mate) 44 g4 ♗xb7, while 43 b8♕ ♖xc6 leads to an 'unclear position' (Portisch), or more precisely – to a draw: 44 ♕b2+ ♔g8 45 g4 h6 46 ♔g3 g5! 47 ♕d4 ♖a6 48 d7?! ♗xd7 49 ♕xd7 ♖e6 (a fortress!).

A stronger alternative is 43 ♗e4! ♖e1! (not 43...♖c8? 44 bxc8♕ ♗xc8 45 ♗c6 ♔f6 46 d7 ♗xd7 47 ♗xd7, winning) 44 b8♕ ♖xe4 45 ♕b2+ ♔g8 46 ♕b5! ♔g7 (46...♖d4?? 47 ♕b8+ ♔g7 48 ♕b2, but it is possible to play 46...♔f8!? 47 d7 ♗xd7 48 ♕xd7 ♖e6 with the same fortress) 47 d7 ♗xd7 48 ♕xd7.



Analysis diagram

48...h6! (but not 48...h5? on account of the fatal weakening of the g5-square) with an impregnable fortress and a draw. After missing this chance, Black can no longer save the game.

41 ♔g1 c2 42 ♖c5 ♖b1+

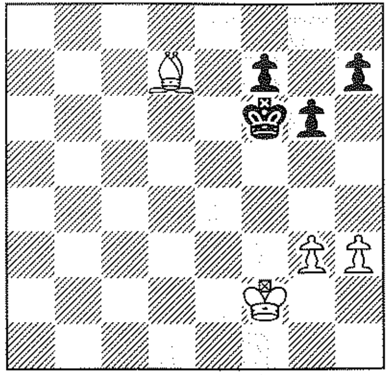
After 42...♔f6? 43 ♖xc2! the mechanism 43...♖xc2 44 b8♕ ♖xc6 does not work on account of the loss of the rook after 45 ♕b2+ and ♕b5+. If 42...♗f5 White wins by 43 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 44 ♗b5 or 43 g4!, while if 42...h5 – 43 ♗f3 ♗f5 44 ♖xc2!

43 ♔f2 c1♕ 44 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 45 ♗b5!

With the king having run away from the 'mined' h2-square, this move is decisive. This explains why 40...♖b2+? was a mistake.

45...♖c8 46 bxc8♕ ♗xc8 47 d7 ♗xd7 48 ♗xd7 ♔f6

'At first sight White wins without any problems, and when analysing the adjourned position Portisch did not even imagine that the win and his qualification for the Candidates matches would hang by a thread. Confident of an easy win, he was about to relax, but a sense of danger forced him to renew the analysis. And it transpired that the advantage could be converted only by very accurate moves.' (Sarkozy)



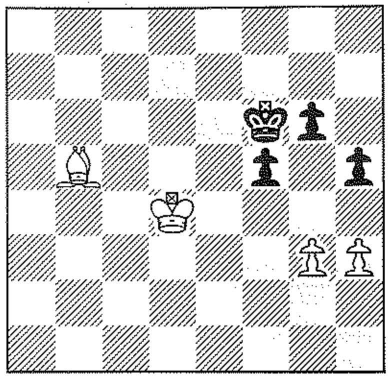
49 ♗e8!

Preventing ...♔e5. Later Averbakh published an interesting analysis, showing what Stein could have hoped for: 49 ♔e3 ♔e5 (49...♔e7 50 ♗a4) 50 ♗b5 *(? – G.K.)* 50...f5 51 ♗d3 g5 52 ♔f3 f4 53 g4 h5! 54 ♗g6 (54 gxh5 ♔f6 55 h6 ♔f7 56 ♗h7 ♔f6 57 ♔g4, and here not 57...♔e7? 58 ♗g8! ♔f6 59 ♔h5 f3 60 ♗d5 f2 61 ♗c4 ♔e7 62 h7, winning, but 57...♔f7! with a draw) 54...hxg4+ 55 hxg4 ♔d4 56 ♔e2 ♔c3 57 ♗d3 ♔d4 58 ♔d2 ♔e5 59 ♔c3 (there is nothing better) 59...f3! 60 ♔d2 ♔f4 61 ♗f5 ♔g3 62 ♔e1 ♔g2! with a study-like draw (incidentally, for rather a long time the machine does not understand this!).

To be fair, it should be mentioned that White would also have won after 49 ♔e3 ♔e5 50 g4! (instead of 50 ♗b5) 50...♔d6 (50...f5 51 g5) 51 ♗c8 ♔e5 52 h4 f6 53 ♔f3 h6 54 ♔e3 ♔d6 (54...h5 55 g5) 55 ♔e4 ♔e7 56 ♔d5 ♔f7 57 ♔d6 f5 58 g5. As is also the case after the game continuation, Black is unable to exchange pawns successfully.

49...♔e7 50 ♗b5 f5 (50...♔f6 51 ♗c4!, or 50...♔d6 51 ♗c4 f6 52 ♗g8 h6 53 ♗h7) **51 ♔e3 ♔f6 52 ♔d4 h5**

After 52...♔g5 53 ♔e5 h5, desperately hoping for 54 ♗d7? h4 55 g4 fxg4 56 ♗xg4 ♔h6 57 ♔f6 ♔h7 with a draw, Portisch would have played 54 h4+! ♔g4 55 ♔f6 ♔xg3 (55...f4 56 gxf4 ♔xf4 57 ♗e2) 56 ♔g5! f4 57 ♗d3 f3 58 ♗xg6 f2 59 ♗d3 and wins, whereas if 52...g5, then (if there is nothing better) 53 ♗e2 ♔e6 54 ♗d1 ♔f6 55 ♔d5 and Black is in zugzwang (55...f4 56 g4).



53 ♔e3! h4 (53...g5 54 ♔d4! ♔e6 55 ♗d3 ♔f6 56 ♗e2 h4 57 g4 fxg4 58 hxg4 and wins) **54 g4 ♔e5 55 ♗f1 ♔f6 56 ♔f4 g5+ 57 ♔e3 ♔e5 58 ♗a6 1-0**

A tense, nervy game, demonstrating, on the one hand, Stein's poor form, and on the other – Portisch's practical control, and his subtle understanding of both purely chess, and psychological nuances.

In his quarter-final Candidates match he lost by the minimum score (4½-5½) to Larsen, who was then very much in the ascendancy. Compensation was provided by his brilliant victory in a strong tournament (Skopje/Ohrid 1968): 1. Portisch – 14½ out of 19; 2. Geller – 13½; 3. Polugayevsky – 13; 4. Hort – 12½ etc.

The Hungarian grandmaster again had to begin the next cycle from the Zonal stage (Raach 1969), and he again overcame this barrier, this occasion after an additional match-tournament. The year of the Interzonal, 1970, was one of almost unbroken successes for him: victory in Hastings, a win over Korchnoi on board 3 in the 'Match of the Century' (2½-1½), and 'silver' at the Olympiad in Siegen.

Here, in the penultimate round, which proved decisive in the battle for the medals, he met the formidable Fischer, who before that had a score of +4=3 against him. In Siegen too the American grandmaster was crushing everyone in turn, and despite a loss to Spassky (*Game No.79*) he could still have overtaken him to achieve the best score on board 1, if he were able to defeat Portisch with Black. But that day diamond cut diamond.

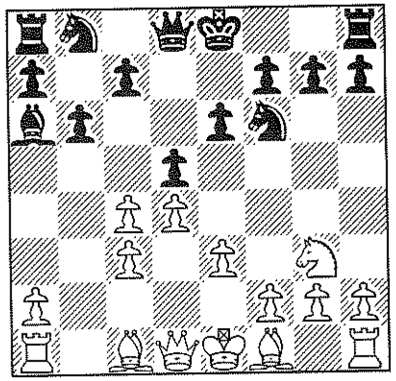
Game 36

L.Portisch-R.Fischer

Siegen Olympiad 1970

Nimzo-Indian Defence E45

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♘e2 ♗a6 6 ♘g3 ♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 d5



8 ♗a3!

An excellent novelty, prepared by Portisch after the failure in his game with Fischer in Santa Monica, which went 8 ♕f3 0-0 9 e4 dxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♕xe4 ♕d7!! (cf. Volume 4).

8...dxc4

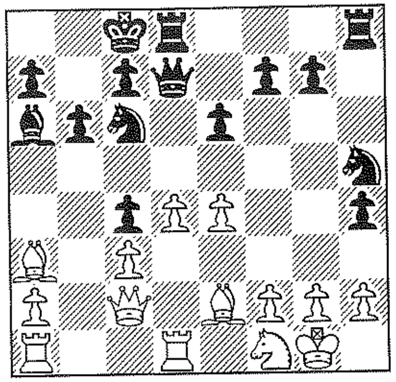
It is safer to go into a slightly inferior endgame by 8...♗xc4 9 ♗xc4 dxc4 10 ♕a4+ ♕d7 11 ♕xc4 ♕c6, but – and this could have been anticipated! – Fischer took the pawn.

9 e4 (9 ♕f3?! ♕d5 10 e4 ♕c6 is inferior) **9...♕d7 10 ♗e2 ♘c6 11 ♕c2 0-0-0 12 0-0 h5 13 ♖fd1 h4 14 ♘f1**

A very sharp situation has arisen, where White has excellent compensation for the pawn.

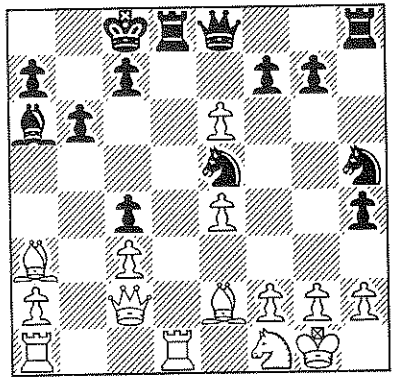
14...♘h5?

And Black immediately makes a bad mistake! It seems to me that Fischer's handling of such complicated positions, where the opponent had the initiative, was not very successful. This was not his sort of play – too ragged and difficult for the development of a clear plan.



15 d5! (this breakthrough is effectively already decisive) **15...♘e5** (15...exd5? 16 ♖xd5 and wins) **16 dxe6 ♕e8**

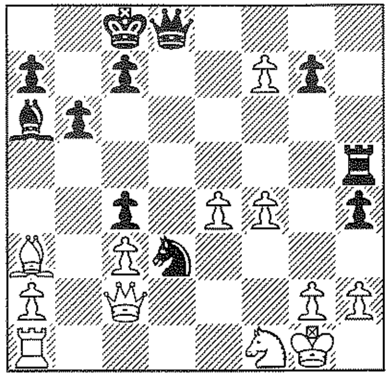
Black would have lost a piece after 16...♕xe6? 17 ♗xh5 (17...♖xh5? is not possible on account of 18 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 19 ♕d1+ and ♕xh5).



17 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 18 ♗xh5 (as Portisch pointed out, if 18 ♕a4? then 18...♘f4! 19 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 and ...♕g5! is strong) **18...♖xh5 19 f4!**

Again 19 ♕a4? is unfavourable, this time in view of 19...♗b5! 20 ♕xa7 (20 ♕xb5? ♘f3+ and ...♖xb5) 20...fxe6 with approximate equality.

19...♘d3 (after 19...fxe6 20 ♕e2! and 21 fxe5 White should be able to convert his extra knight) **20 exf7**



20...c5

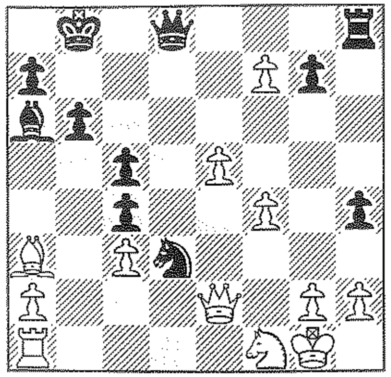
A very resourceful defence, retaining a semblance of counterplay: for the moment the bishop at a3 is offside, while the knight at d3 is very strong.

21 ♕e2

This move does not spoil anything, but Fischer thought that 21 e5!? was stronger. And indeed, after 21...♖h8 (21...♖f5 22 ♕a4!) 22 ♕a4 ♔b7 23 ♘e3 (with the threat of ♘xc4) 23...h3 24 ♖d1 b5 25 ♖b1!, or 21...♖h6 22 ♕e2 (22 ♕a4 b5 23 ♕d1! is also good) followed by ♕g4+ and e5-e6 White would have won.

An even more forceful alternative is the computer's recommendation 21 ♕a4! ♔b7 22 ♖d1 h3!? (22...b5 23 ♖b1!, while if 22...♖h8, then 23 ♗xc5! is immediately decisive) 23 g3 ♖h8 (it is also bad to play 23...g6 24 ♘e3, or 23...b5 24 ♖b1) 24 ♗xc5! bxc5 25 ♖b1+ ♘b4 26 a3! (but not 26 cxb4?? ♕d4+) 26...♕d3 27 axb4 ♕xb1 (27...♕xe4 28 ♖b2) 28 ♕d7+ ♔b6 29 ♕e6+ ♔b7 30 ♕e7+ ♔b6 31 ♕xc5+ ♔b7 32 f8♕ ♖xf8 33 ♕xf8 ♕xe4 34 ♕xg7+ ♔c6 35 ♕h6+ and ♕xh3 – Black can resign.

21...♖h8 22 e5 ♔b8!



23 e6!

The most accurate, since it brings the pawn closer to the queening square and restricts the opponent's counterplay. Portisch attaches a '?!' sign to 23 ♕g4 and gives the variation 23...♗c8 24 e6 (24 ♕xg7? ♕f8!) 24...♕f6 25 f5 g6 'with an unclear game'. But in my opinion, the white pawns are so strong that almost any move wins – for example, 26 ♗c1 gxf5 27 ♕g8!, or 26...♗xe6 27 ♕xg6! Instead of 23...♗c7, 23...h3 is slightly more tenacious, but here too Black is lost after 24 ♘e3 hxg2 25 e6 ♕f8 26 ♖d1 or 25...♗b7 26 ♘xc4 ♕f6 27 f5.

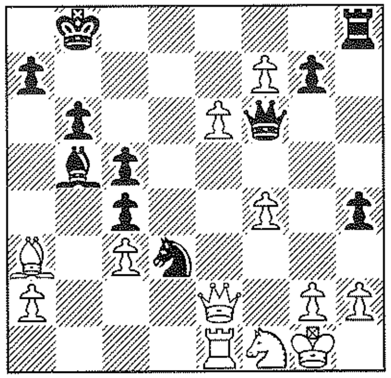
23...♕f6 24 ♖e1

It was simpler to play 24 ♕e4! h3 (24...♗b7 25 ♕xc4 ♘xf4 26 e7) 25 ♘e3! (25 g4 ♘xf4 26 ♖e1 or 25...♗b7 26 ♕f5! ♕e7 27 ♘e3 g6 28 ♘d5! is also possible) 25...hxg2 (25...♗b7 26 ♕f5) 26 ♕f5 ♕xc3 27 ♖d1! ♕d4 (27...♗c8 28 f8♕) 28 ♖xd3 cxd3 29 ♕e5+ ♕xe5 30 fxe5 and wins. Such powerful pawns should win automatically, although it is much harder to demonstrate this at the board, than in the quiet of one's home with the help of a computer.

The psychological subtext of Portisch's decision is understandable to me: after employing a successful novelty in the opening and quickly gaining a winning position, although one not yet without its sharpness, he became nervous (it's no joke – to beat the great Fischer!) and as a result he chose 'the safest way', which was the developing move 24 ♖e1.

24...♗b5!

Again the best chance. After 24...♕e7 (24...♘xe1? 25 ♕e5+! Portisch) 25 ♖d1 h3 White wins by both 26 g3 ♗b7 27 f5, and 26 ♕g4! hxg2 27 ♘e3.



25 ♗xc5!! (a brilliant stroke, radically solving the problem of the a3 bishop) **25...bxc5?!**

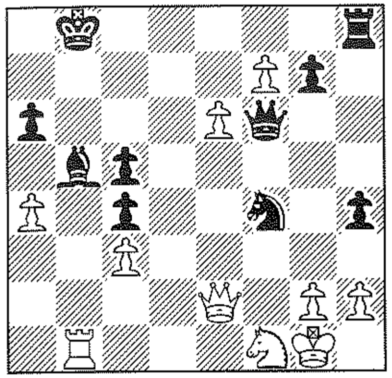
A more tenacious defence was 25...♘xc5 26 ♕e5+ ♕xe5 27 ♖xe5 ♖f8 (27...♘xe6? 28 ♖xe6 ♖f8 29 ♖e7, or 28...♗d7 29 ♖g6 ♖f8 30 ♖xg7 ♗e6 31 ♖g6 ♗xf7 32 ♖h6 b5 33 a3 and wins) 28 f5 'with the idea of ♘d2-f3-h4, winning' (Portisch). This requires some refinement:

1) 28...♗c6 29 ♘d2 ♘d3 (no better is 29...♔c7 30 ♘xc4, or 29...♘b7 30 ♘e4! with the threat of ♘g5) 30 ♖e3 b5 31 ♘e4 ♘e5 32 ♘g5 and wins;

2) 28...♔c7!, and now not 29 ♘d2?! ♔d6! 30 ♘xc4+ ♔e7 31 ♖xc5 (31 ♘e3 ♗c6 32 c4 ♖c8) 31...bxc5 32 ♘e5 ♔f6 33 ♘g6 ♖a8 34 g4 hxg3 35 hxg3 ♗c4, or 29 ♘e3?! ♔d6! 30 ♖d5+ ♔e7 31 ♖xc5 bxc5 32 ♘d5+ ♔d6 33 ♘f4 ♗e8! 34 ♘g6 ♗xf7 35 ♘xf8 ♗e8! 36 ♘d7 (36 ♔f2 ♔e5) 36...♗h5 with good drawing chances, but only 29 ♖d5! ♗c6 (29...h3 30 ♘e3) 30 ♖d4 (threatening ♘e3-d5+) 30...g6 (30...♘b7 31 ♖g4!; 30...h3 31 ♘e3 hxg2 32 ♘xc4) 31 fxg6 ♘xe6 32 ♖xc4 ♔d6 33 ♘e3 ♗b7 34 ♖xh4 and wins.

I think that after the exchange of queens, despite the possible pitfalls, Portisch would most probably have found a sure way to win.

26 ♖b1 a6 27 a4 (for a computer White's task is simpler here than after 25...♘xc5 26 ♕e5+ ♕xe5 27 ♖xe5 ♖f8, but for a human it is more difficult, since with the queens on he imagines that there are all sorts of threats) **27...♘xf4**



28 ♕f3?

Portisch nevertheless misses the win, by making the worst of the possible queen moves. Later he pointed out 28 ♕e4! ♕g5 (28...♘xe6 29 axb5) 29 ♔h1 h3 (29...♘d3 30 ♕f3!) 30 g3 ♘d3 31 e7!, winning.

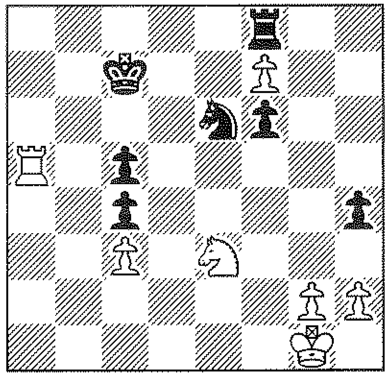
However, he could also have won by 28 ♕xc4! ♕g5 29 ♕a2 c4!? 30 axb5 ♕c5+ 31 ♔h1 h3! 32 bxa6+ ♔a8 33 ♖b2! (but not 33 ♖b7? hxg2+ 34 ♕xg2 ♘xg2 35 e7 ♕c8! 36 ♖c7! ♕xc7 37 e8♕+ ♕c8 with equality) 33...♖d8 (33...♘xe6 34 ♕a4!) 34 ♕b1! ♕c6 (34...hxg2+ 35 ♖xg2 ♕c6 36 ♕b7+!) 35 ♘e3 hxg2+ 36 ♘xg2 ♘xe6 37 a7, and even by 28 ♕d2! with the amusing variation 28...♖d8 29 e7 ♖xd2 30 f8♕+ ♔a7 31 e8♕ ♘h3+ 32 gxh3 ♕g5+ 33 ♘g3 ♗xe8 34 ♕xe8, forcing 34...♕d8 35 ♕xd8 and ♘e4.

28...♘xe6! 29 ♕xf6

It transpires that if 29 ♕c6 there is the defence 29...♘c7! 30 axb5 axb5 with equality (Portisch). The machine also examines 29 ♕e4 ♘c7 30 axb5 axb5 31 ♕xc4 ♕e5! (it is dangerous to play 31...♕f5?! 32 ♖xb5+! ♘xb5

33 ♕xb5+ ♔c7 34 ♕e8 ♕c8 35 ♕e7+ ♔c6 36 ♘e3) 32 ♕xh4 (32 h3 ♖f8) 32...♖xh4 33 f8♕+ ♔b7 34 ♕f3+ ♕e4 with equality.

29...gxf6 30 axb5 axb5 31 ♖xb5+ ♔c7 32 ♘e3 ♖f8 33 ♖a5



Now White only has slightly the better endgame.

33...♔b7! 34 ♘xc4

Or 34 ♘f5 ♖xf7 35 ♖a4 (35 ♘xh4 ♖d7) 35...♖h7 36 ♖xc4 h3 with equality.

34...♖xf7 35 ♖xc5 ♘xc5 36 ♘d6+ ♔c6 37 ♘xf7 ♘e4 38 ♘h6

Tired and upset, Portisch does not even consider 38 h3!? ♘xc3 39 ♘h8 ♔d5 40 ♘g6 and ♘xh4 with an extra pawn (however, here too a draw was the most probable outcome).

38...♔d5 (38...♘xc3 39 h3) **39 ♘f5 h3 ½-½**

Draw, although it was still possible to try 40 ♘e3+! ♔e5 41 ♘d1 hxg2 42 ♔xg2 – after all, White is a pawn up (for some reason no one has pointed out this chance).

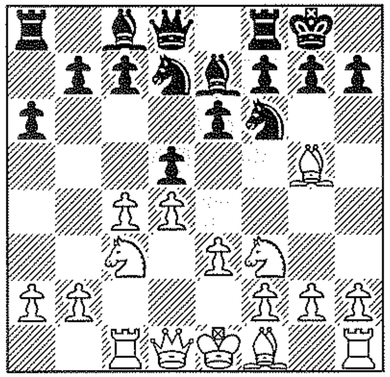
Three months later Fischer won the Interzonal tournament in Mallorca in brilliant fashion, but Portisch, although he again drew with him, failed by half a point to finish in the cherished top six, sharing 7th-8th places with Smyslov. An additional match between them for the first reserve place brought a draw (3-3), but Portisch was declared the winner, thanks to a superior Berger score in the tournament. Alas, this did not give anything, since none of the pretenders for the supreme title declined to take part in the Candidates matches.

For the next world championship Portisch aimed to arrive fully prepared, as indicated by his striking successes in 1972: victories in Wijk aan Zee and Las Palmas, an excellent result at the Olympiad in Skopje (+8=8-1), where Hungary again provided sharp rivalry to the USSR, and a share of 1st-3rd places with Petrosian and Karpov in the strong tournament in San Antonio.

1973 was also a happy year for him: victory in the Vidmar Memorial, a share of 2nd-4th places in the Interzonal tournament in Petropolis and a confident victory in an additional four-round match-tournament for two places in the Candidates matches: 1. Portisch – 5½ out of 8; 2. Polugayevsky – 3½; 3. Geller – 3. The outcome of this event was largely determined by the following game.

Game 37
L.Polugayevsky-L.Portisch
Match-Tournament,
Portoroz 1973, 1st cycle
Queen's Gambit D63

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♖c1 a6



I should remind you that this variation was regularly employed by Alekhine in his match with Capablanca (1927), whereas the latter, in turn, preferred the traditional move 7...c6.

8 a3?!

Allowing Black to carry out Alekhine's plan of the extended fianchetto. In the 3rd cycle the two players contested the 'Carlsbad' formation – 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗d3 c6 10 ♕c2 ♖e8 (10...h6 – *Volume 1, Game No.105*) 11 0-0 ♘f8 12 ♖ce1 ♘e4 13 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 14 ♗xe4 dxe4 15 ♘d2 f5 16 f3 (or 16 d5 ♗d7 with equality) 16...exf3 17 ♘xf3 ♗e6 18 e4 fxe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖ad8 20 ♘a4 (an attempt to exploit the weakening of the dark squares caused by the move ...a7-a6) 20...♕d6! 21 ♖fe1 ♗f7 22 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 23 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 24 ♘c5 b5! 25 ♘xa6 ♗h5 26 ♕c5 ♕g6 27 ♘e1 ♕b1 ½-½.

Instead of 20 ♘a4, 20 ♖e5!? is interesting – by analogy with the game Marshall-Rubinstein (Moscow 1925), which went 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗d3 ♖e8 9 0-0 c6 10 ♕c2 ♘f8 11 ♖ae1 ♘e4 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 ♗xe4 dxe4 14 ♘d2 f5 15 f3 exf3 16 ♘xf3 ♗e6 17 e4 fxe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖ad8 19 ♖e5!? h6 20 ♘e4 with the initiative for White. In this particular variation, it is more accurate for Black to play 18...h6!? 19 ♘e2 (19 ♖e5 ♘d7!) 19...♕b4 with equality (Timman-Yusupov, 8th matchgame, Tilburg 1986), or 19 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 20 h3 (if 20 ♖e5 or 20 ♖1e3 Short has successfully played 20...♕f7) 20...♕d6 with approximate equality (Yusupov-Kramnik, Vienna 1996).

Subsequently, in the 10th game of his match with Petrosian (Palma de Mallorca 1974), Portisch himself improved White's play with 8 c5!? c6 9 ♗d3 b6 10 cxb6 c5 (10...♕xb6 11 0-0! ♕xb2 12 ♘a4 Hort-Portisch, Madrid 1973) 11 0-0 c4 12 ♗c2 ♘xb6?! 13 ♘e5 ♗b7 14 f4 ♖b8? (14...♘fd7! 15 ♕h5 f5) 15 f5! ♘bd7 16 ♗f4 ♖c8 17 ♕f3 exf5 18 ♗xf5 ♘xe5 19 dxe5 ♘e4 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♕h3 g6 22 ♖cd1 ♕b6 23 ♖d7 ♖ce8 24 e6!... 1-0. This important game practically put the move 7...a6 out of use.

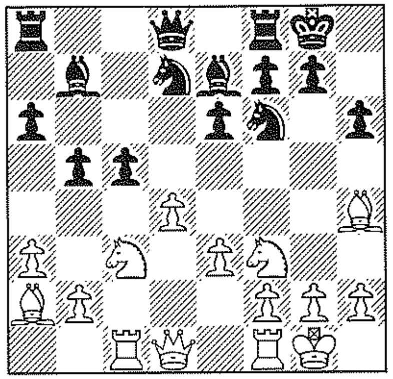
8...c6

It is more consistent to play 8...h6 9 ♗h4 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 b5 11 ♗e2 (*Volume 1, Game No.128*) 11...c5!, or immediately 8...dxc4 9 ♗xc4 b5, as Csom, Portisch's second, played against Uhlmann (Berlin 1968): 10 ♗a2 c5 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 ♕e2 h6 13 ♗h4 ♘e4 14 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 15 dxc5 ♘dxc5 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 ½-½.

9 ♗d3

A harmless move, transposing into positions from the previous note. Since the times of Alekhine and Euwe White has more often continued the struggle for a tempo by 9 ♕c2 (*Volume 1, Game No.120*) or 9 h3 h6 10 ♗f4 (*Volume 2, Game No.19*).

9...h6! 10 ♗h4 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 b5 12 ♗a2 c5 13 0-0 ♗b7



Having regained the tempo spent on ...c7-c6, Black has fully equalised and is now threatening ...c5-c4.

14 dxc5 ♘xc5 15 ♘d4 ♖c8

A simpler path was 15...♘fe4!? 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 with equality (Polugayevsky).

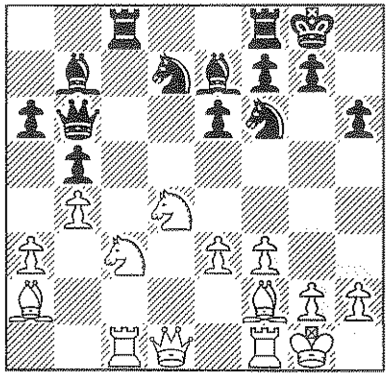
16 f3!?

A double-edged undertaking: in avoiding the tedious 16 ♕e2 ♘fe4, White is trying to outplay his opponent literally from nothing.

16...♕b6 17 b4

'If 17 ♕e2, then 17...♘a4 with a good game for Black.' (Polugayevsky) Indeed, after 18 ♘e4!? ♖xc1 (it is inferior to play 18...g5 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♗f2, 18...♘xe4 19 ♗xe7, or 18...♗xe4 19 fxe4) 19 ♖xc1 ♕d8 he has a solid position, but why go in for such concessions? 17...♖fd8 with equality is more logical.

17...♘cd7 18 ♗f2



'The impression is that White has achieved marked successes and that it is not easy for Black to choose an acceptable plan.' (Polugayevsky)

18...♗d6!

A splendid resource. By attacking the h2-pawn, Black provokes a further weakening of the opponent's kingside. It was inaccurate to play 18...♘e5?! 19 e4 ♕c7 (19...♖fd8? 20 ♘f5!; 19...♕d8 20 ♘xe6!?) 20 ♘d5!, or 18...♕a7 19 e4 ♕b8 20 ♗g3! (Polugayevsky's move 20 ♘b3 is parried by the simple 20...♖fd8 with equality) 20...♘e5 (if 20...♕a7, then 21 e5! ♘d5 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♘xd5 exd5 24 ♗f2) 21 ♘xe6! fxe6 22 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 23 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 24 ♘e2 with some advantage to White.

19 e4 ♕c7!

'Portisch is not afraid of the opposition of queen and rook! During the course of a long think over this position I couldn't help feeling that White stood significantly better and that he should be able to find some decisive continuation.' (Polugayevsky)

20 g3 ♕b8 21 ♕e2

'I began to be beset by the fixed idea of the knight sacrifice on e6. I was not even put off by the example of Geller, who two days earlier had suffered a failure on this same ill-fated square (*Game No.25*),' writes Polugayevsky. 'Had I assessed the situation soberly, I should have played 21 ♘b3.' However, here too Black has no problems after 21...♖fd8 22 ♕e2 (22 ♘a5? ♘e5!) 22...♗e5.

21...♘e5!? (aiming at White's weaknesses)

22 ♖fd1

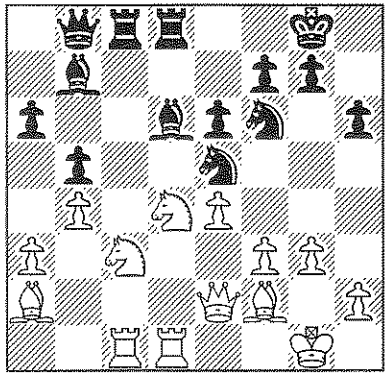
If 22 f4?, then Black has the very strong reply 22...♘eg4! 23 e5 ♘xf2 24 ♕xf2 ♖xc3! (Gufeld) 25 ♖xc3 ♘e4 26 ♕e3 ♘xc3 27 ♕xc3 ♗c7, when the powerful bishops supported by the heavy pieces give Black a great advantage: 28 ♘f3 (it is bad to play 28 ♘c6? ♗b6+ 29 ♔g2 ♖c8, 28 ♕c5? ♗a8! 29 ♘c6 ♕b7, or 28 h3? ♗b6 29 ♔h2 ♖c8 30 ♕b2 ♕c7!, winning) 28...♗b6+ 29 ♔g2 ♖c8 30 ♕d3 ♖d8 31 ♕e2 ♕c7 etc.

'It was not yet too late for 22 ♘b3, although Black has the reply 22...♘c4, when 23 ♘c5 ♘xa3 is unclear, for example: 24 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 25 e5 ♗xb4, or 24 e5 ♗xe5 25 ♘xb7 ♖xc3.' (Polugayevsky) Or 25...♗xc3! 26 ♗c5 ♖xc5! 27 ♘xc5 ♗xb4. All these variations favour Black, as does 24 f4?! ♗xc5 25 ♗xc5 ♖fd8. There only remains 24 ♖fd1 ♗xc5 25 ♗xc5 ♖fd8 and White can maintain the balance, provided only that he does not play f3-f4?! Also after 23 ♖fd1 ♘xa3 24 ♗c5 ♘e8 he must think primarily about how to equalise.

All these difficulties are the direct consequence of the series of weaknesses (beginning with 16 f3), caused by White's excessively aggressive mood. Polugayevsky was playing sharply for a win!

22...♖fd8

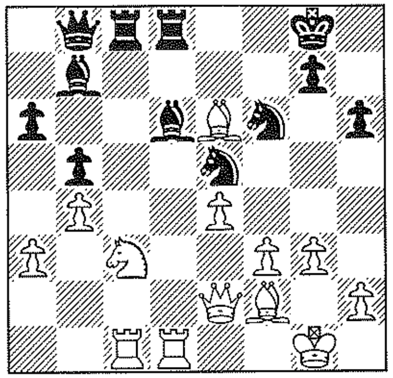
The first critical moment of the battle.



23 ♘xe6?!

'Since I still had thoughts of finding a decisive continuation, I went in for a combination, involving great complications. If 23 ♘b3, then 23...♘c4 is now quite safe.' (Polugayevsky) But in any case this would not have been so dangerous for White, for example: 23 ♘b3! (again not 23 f4? ♘eg4 24 e5 ♘xf2 25 ♕xf2 ♖xc3!) 23...♘c4 24 ♘c5 ♗xc5 25 bxc5 with a roughly equal game, since if ...♘xa3, immediately or after the exchange on d1, there is ♕b2!

23...fxe6 24 ♗xe6+



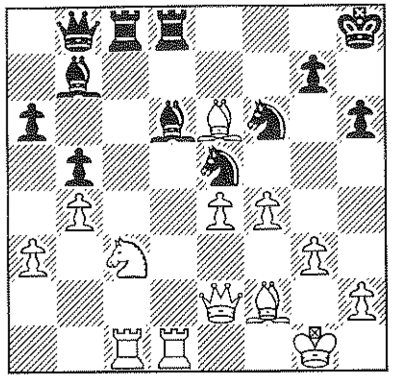
24...♔h8

Polugayevsky thought that 24...♘f7?! was a stronger reply, but this would have given White better chances than in the game: 25 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 (25...♗xc8 26 ♗d4!, but not 26 f4? ♗g4) 26 f4!? (26 ♗d4 ♗e5!) 26...♕a8 27 ♗d4!, and 27...♘xe4? 28 ♘xe4 ♖xc1 29 ♖xc1 ♗xe4 is not possible on account of 30 ♕g4!, or even 25 ♕a2!? ♖f8 (25...♖c7 26 ♗b6 ♖f8 27 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 28 ♔g2) 26 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 (26...♗xc8?! 27 f4 ♗g4 28 ♖e1) 27 ♗d4 ♗e5 28 ♘e2 etc.

25 f4

'It was this move, naturally, that White had in mind, when he sacrificed the piece,' writes Polugayevsky, condemning 25 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 26 f4?! on account of 26...♗g4 (indeed, after 27 ♕a2 ♗xd1 28 fxe5 ♗xe5 29 ♘xd1 ♘xe4 Black has the advantage). However, it is stronger to play 26 ♗d4(c5) with unclear chances.

If 25...♖xc8!? (instead of 25...♗xc8), White should also play 26 ♗d4!, since the sharp 26 f4?! ♘c4 27 e5? (it is not yet too late for 27 ♗d4 ♗e7 28 ♘d5) runs into 27...♗xe5! (Gufeld) 28 fxe5 ♘xe5 with a crushing attack: 29 ♗c5 ♘f3+ 30 ♔f1 ♖e8, or 29 ♕b2 ♘f3+ 30 ♔g2 ♕e5.



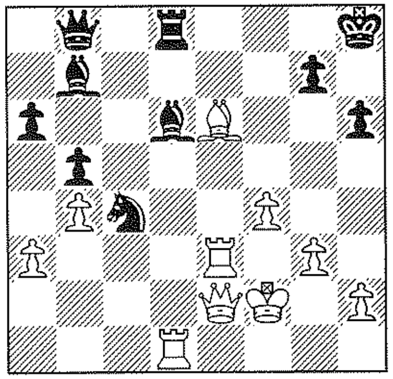
25...♖xc3!

Black aims to get his blow in first. Portisch was not tempted by 25...♘c4 26 e5? ♗xe5! 27 fxe5 ♘xe5 28 ♗xc8 ♖xc8! (Polugayevsky; 28...♘f3+? 29 ♕xf3!) 29 ♕a2 ♘fg4 30 ♗c5 ♘f3+ 31 ♔g2 ♕e5 and wins, most probably on account of 26 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 27 ♗d4 ♗e7 28 a4!? with dynamic equilibrium.

26 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 27 ♖e3

'Five pieces in a row on one file – this does not often happen!' (Hajtun)

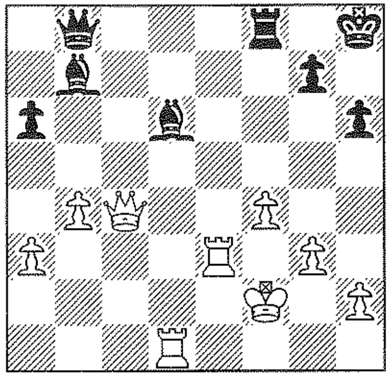
27...♘xf2 28 ♔xf2 ♘c4



'Both players deliberately went in for this position. I do not agree with it being evaluated in favour of Black: he loses another pawn and the white rooks on the central files are very dangerous. In the event of 28...♘c6 29 ♗f7! White would be threatening ♖xd6.' (Polugayevsky) While if 29...♗e7, then 30 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 31 ♕d3 with equality.

29 ♗xc4 bxc4 30 ♕xc4 ♖f8!

After 30...a5 31 ♕b5! axb4 32 axb4 ♕c7 33 ♖d4 the active rook plus two pawns counterbalance the two powerful bishops. Black's move provokes an immediate crisis.



31 ♖d4?

'Tired by the calculation of complicated variations, White commits a fatal mistake, leading to defeat. After 31 ♔e1! (this was the move that I was initially intending to make) the chances would have been roughly equal.' (Polugayevsky) Analysis confirms this evaluation:

1) 31...♖f6 (with the threat of ...♗c6 and ...a6-a5 – Hajtun) 32 ♖e6 ♖xe6+ 33 ♕xe6 ♗f8 34 ♕d7 with equality;

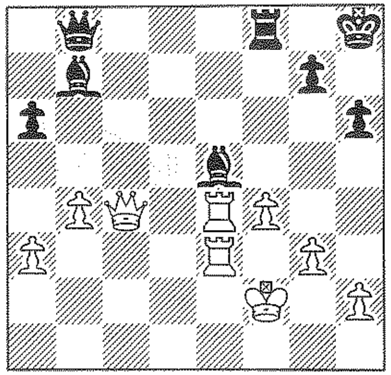
2) 31...♗c8 32 ♕c6 (Polugayevsky) 32...♕a7 33 ♕c3 ♗b8 34 ♕c5 ♕f7 35 ♕e7! ♕g8 36 ♖d2 ♗f5 37 ♔f2 or 32 ♕d3!? ♗c7 33 ♖e7, in both cases with sufficient counterplay;

3) 31...♖e8! 32 ♖e6! ♗f8 33 f5 (Polugayevsky; 33 ♖d2!?) 33...♖xe6+ 34 ♕xe6 a5 35 f6! axb4 36 fxg7+ ♗xg7 37 axb4 ♗f3 38 ♖d4 ♗xd4 39 ♕xh6+, gaining a draw.

31...♗e5!

'The rook cannot leave the fourth rank on account of 32...♗xf4 and White simply remains a piece down.' (Polugayevsky)

32 ♖de4



32...♗xe4

The merciless computer instantly discovers 32...♗c7! (with the threat of ...♗xe4) 33 ♖d4 ♗b6, winning.

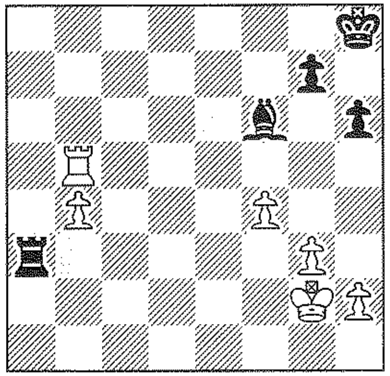
33 ♖xe4 ♕b6+ 34 ♔g2 (34 ♕c5 ♕xc5+ 35 bxc5 ♗b2 36 ♖a4 ♖c8 37 ♖xa6 ♖xc5 was no better) **34...♗f6** (34...♗b2!?) **35 ♖e6**

In time-trouble, White tries to save himself by eliminating the a6-pawn.

35...♕b5!

A technically accurate solution. 35...♕d8 36 ♖xa6 ♕d2+ 37 ♔h3 ♕d1 38 ♖e6 ♗b2 39 ♖e3 was not so clear.

36 ♕xb5 (White cannot avoid the exchange of queens without losing material: 36 ♕e4 ♗b2!, or 36 ♕c2 ♕d5+) **36...axb5 37 ♖b6 ♖a8 38 ♖xb5 ♖xa3**



This endgame is amazingly similar to the

Portisch-Stein ending (*Game No.35*): again there are three pawns against two on the kingside and again the bishop is of opposite colour to the queening square of the h-pawn.

39 h4

'39 g4 was recommended, in order to exchange pawns as soon as possible,' writes Polugayevsky, and he examines 39...g5. I prefer the computer method – 39...♖a4! followed by ...♗e7 or ...♗c3.

I should add that no better was 39 ♖b8+ ♔h7 40 b5 ♖a2+ 41 ♔h1 (41 ♔h3 ♗d4! and ...♗g1) 41...♖b2, or 39 h3 ♗c3 40 ♖b8+ ♔h7 41 b5 ♖b3 etc.

39...♗c3 40 ♖b6

If 40 g4, then Black has 40...♗d2 41 f5 ♗f4! (but not Polugayevsky's move 41...♗e1? on account of 42 ♖b8+ ♔h7 43 g5! hxg5 44 hxg5 ♖g3+ 45 ♔f1 ♗d2 46 f6! with a draw) with the threat of ...♖g3+, and if 42 ♔f2, then 42...♗g3+ and ...♗xh4.

40...♗e1 41 ♖g6 ♗xb4 42 h5 ♗e1 43 ♔h3 ♔g8 44 ♔g2 ♔f7 45 ♔h3 ♖e3 46 ♔g2 ♖e6! 47 ♖g4

47 ♖xe6 ♔xe6 48 g4 ♗d2 49 ♔f3 ♔d5 does not require any commentary.

47...♖a6 48 ♖h4 ♖a2+ 49 ♔h3 ♗f2 50 ♖g4 ♖a5 51 ♔g2 (51 ♔h4 ♖f5!) **51...♗d4 52 ♖h4 ♗f6 53 ♖h1 ♖a1 0-1**

54 ♖h3 ♔e6 55 ♔f3 (55 g4 ♖a2+ and ...♔d5) 55...♔f5 56 g4+ ♔e6 57 ♖h2 ♖a3+ 58 ♔e4 ♖a4+ 59 ♔f3 ♖xf4+!

By the luck of the draw, in the very first Candidates match in 1974 Portisch's opponent was Petrosian, who over the course of 13 years had not won a single game against him, and had lost four. However, on this occasion (after four draws) the ex-world champion won with White in the 5th game and, as he himself later remembered, at last resolved the problem of the 'difficult' Portisch.

You will ask: what was this problem? It would appear to be a certain lack of compatibility in the styles of the two players. Portisch's straightforward, 'correct', rigorously positional style, with Black – a destroyer, with White – a creator, but in a strictly defined framework, was unpleasant for Petrosian, with his deeply individual and clever manner of a 'chess left-hander'. Nevertheless, in this match he was able to dismiss his previous failures.

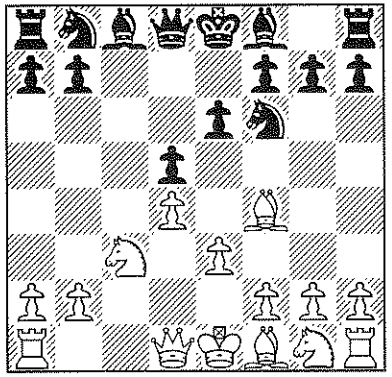
'After the 9th game the score became 2-0 in Petrosian's favour. Victory, as they say, was just a stone's throw away,' writes Averbakh, 'but the 44-year-old ex-world champion was already very tired, and at his age it was not easy to restore his supply of nervous energy.' In the 10th game Portisch finally opened his account, and the extremely distressed Petrosian quickly agreed a draw in the 11th. And then came the day of the 12th game, with the match situation tense in the extreme.

Game 38
L.Portisch-T.Petrosian
Candidates Match,
Palma de Mallorca 1974, 12th game
Slav Defence D13

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 cxd5 (the dry and tedious Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence was a formidable weapon in Portisch's hands) **4...cxd5 5 ♗f4 e6**

After 5...♘c6 6 e3 ♗f5 Black has to reckon with 7 ♕b3!? (7 ♘f3 – *Game No.74*).

6 e3



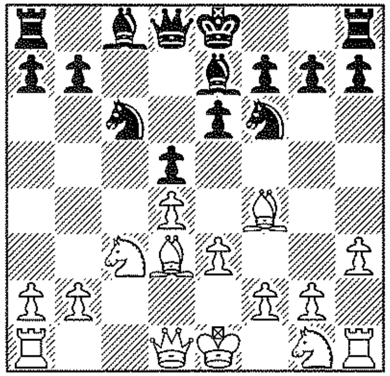
6...♗e7

The game Portisch-Petrosian (Moscow 1967) went 6...♘c6 7 ♘f3 ♗d6 8 ♗g3!? 0-0 9 ♗d3 ♖e8 10 ♘e5! ♗xe5?! 11 dxe5 ♘d7 12 f4 ♕b6?! 13 0-0! ♕xe3+? (over-optimistic; 13...f5!?) 14 ♔h1 ♕b6 15 ♕h5 ♘f8 16 ♖f3! ♘g6 17 ♗f2! ♕d8 (17...♕xb2 18 ♖b1 ♕xc3 19 ♖h3!) 18 ♘b5 ♘ce7 19 ♘d6 ♗d7 20 ♗h4 ♕b6 21 ♖h3 h6 22 ♗f6! ♘f5 23 ♗xf5 1-0. An impressive rout!

Later Petrosian defeated Kupreichik with White (44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976) after 8...♘e4?! 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 ♘d2 ♗xg3 11 hxg3 e5 12 dxe5 ♕a5 13 ♕b3! ♕xe5 14 ♗e2 (14 ♖c1!?) 14...♕e7 15 ♖c1 0-0 16 ♘xe4! ♕xe4 17 ♗d3 ♕b4+?! (17...♕e5) 18 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 19 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 20 ♗b1+! ♔g8 21 ♖c4! a5 22 ♗h7+ ♔h8 23 ♗f5+! 1-0.

7 ♗d3 ♘c6 8 h3

Preserving the f4-bishop from attack by ...♘h5. With that splendid win in 1967 to his credit, Portisch as though says to his opponent: 'You were unable to solve your problems then – let's see if you can solve them now!'

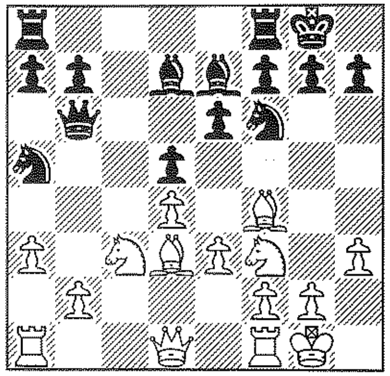


8...0-0 9 ♘f3 ♗d7

In view of the fact that the pawn is already at h3, it possibly made sense to play 9...♗d6, despite the loss of a tempo. It is true that White could have replied 10 0-0, allowing 10...♗xf4 11 exf4, especially since Petrosian did not like such cramped positions with the opponent's pawns at d4 and f4.

10 0-0 ♕b6 (or 10...a6 11 a3!) **11 a3!** (more energetic than 11 ♕e2 ♖fc8 12 ♖ac1 ♗e8 with equality, Botvinnik-Smyslov, 20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952) **11...♘a5**

Of course, not 11...♕xb2? 12 ♘a4, while if 11...♖fc8 there could also have followed 12 ♘a4!? and then b2-b4.



12 b4

Here Portisch thought for 20 minutes. White could have considered 12 ♘e5!? ♖fc8 13 ♕e2 ♗e8 14 ♖ac1 ♘b3 (if 14...♘d7, then 15 ♘a4! ♕d8(b3) 16 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♘c5) 15 ♖c2, retaining some initiative.

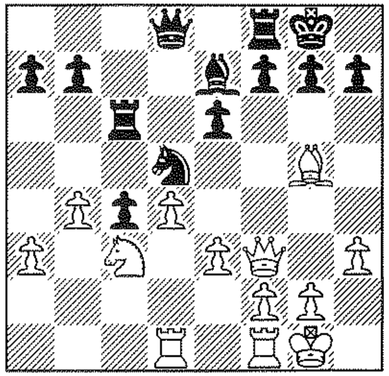
12...♘c4 13 ♘e5 ♖ac8

And this move took Petrosian half an hour. If 13...♘b2?, then 14 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 15 ♕c2+ or 14...♘xh7 15 ♕c2, remaining a pawn up.

14 ♗xc4!? dxc4 15 ♗g5

A crucial decision: White believes his mobile centre is stronger than the passed c-pawn, which is securely blockaded by the knight.

15...♕d8 16 ♕f3 ♗c6 17 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♖ad1 ♘d5!



After obtaining the somewhat inferior game from the opening, Black aims for simplification.

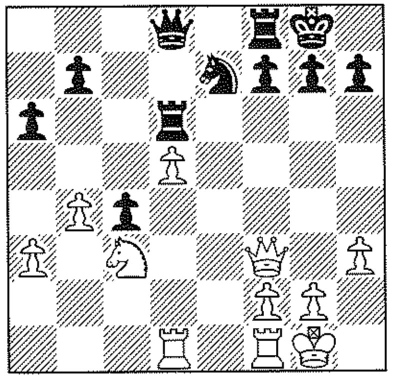
19 ♗xe7 ♘xe7

Averbakh and Zaitsev, the ex-world champion's seconds, recommended 19...♕xe7?! 20 ♘xd5 exd5 21 ♕xd5 c3 'with counterplay sufficient to save the game.' Averbakh adds: 'Petrosian thought that the need to resort to extreme measures had not yet arrived, but on this occasion his positional feeling let him down.' But in my opinion it was just the opposite: what told was his famous sense of danger, since after 22 ♖d3! c2 23 ♖c1 ♖fc8 24 ♕b3 White would soon have won the c-pawn and with it the game.

20 e4 (intending to create a passed pawn on the d-file) **20...a6**

20...f5!? (Zaitsev) suggests itself, for example: 21 e5 ♘d5 22 ♘xd5 ♕xd5, or 21 d5 fxe4 22 dxc6 exf3 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 cxb7 ♖b8 with equality. According to Zaitsev, 21 b5 ♖d6 22 exf5 ♘xf5 23 ♕xb7 ♘xd4 24 ♔h1?! 'leads to a positional advantage for White', although after 24...♘e2! (24...♕a5!?) 25 ♖xd6 ♘g3+! 26 ♔g1 ♕xd6 it is actually Black who has some advantage.

21 d5 exd5 22 exd5 ♖d6



Now each side has a passed pawn, but White's pieces are somewhat more active and his d-pawn is somewhat stronger.

23 ♖d2?!

Petrosian was seriously afraid of 23 ♖d4, although after 23...♘c6! (Hajtun; 23...b5!?) 24 ♖f4 (24 ♖e4 f5 25 ♖e3 ♘d4 or here 25 ♖f4 ♘e5 26 ♕e3 g5! 27 ♖d4 ♖e8) 24...♘e5 25 ♕e3 f6 26 ♖e4 b5 nothing terrible for Black is apparent.

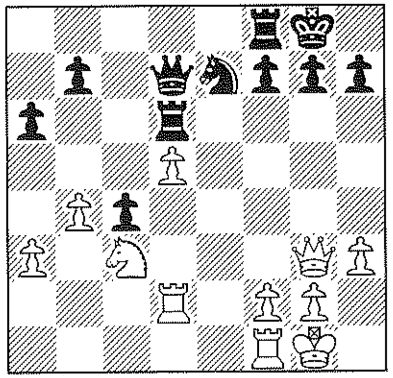
It looks more logical to play 23 a4!? ♕d7 24 ♖fe1 (if 24 b5, then Black has the possibility of 24...axb5 25 axb5 ♘f5! 26 ♖fe1 ♖g6 and ...♘d6 with equality), or immediately 23 ♖fe1! b5 24 a4 ♕d7 (it is inferior to play 24...bxa4?! 25 ♕e4 ♖e8 26 ♘xa4! ♕c8 27 ♘c3 ♖dd8 28 ♕d4 with unpleasant pressure: 28...♘f5 29 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 30 ♕c5!) 25 axb5 axb5 26 ♖d4, retaining a slight advantage.

23...♕c7! (a subtle idea) **24 ♕g3**

White rises to the occasion: the tempting 24 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 25 ♘e4 ♖xd5 26 ♘g5 would have been parried by 26...♖xd2! 27 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 28 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 29 ♕f8+ ♘g8 30 ♘f7+ ♕xf7 31 ♕xf7 c3 32 ♕c7 c2 33 ♔h2 ♖xf2 with a draw (Averbakh, Zaitsev).

24...♕d7!

'After this reply Portisch became anxious. To all appearances, he had overlooked something.' (Zaitsev)



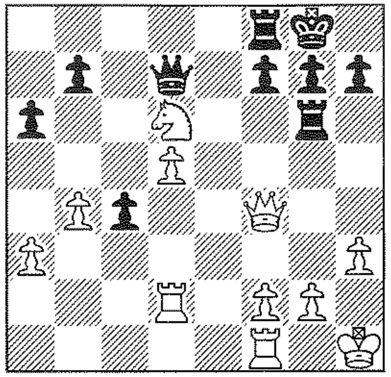
25 ♔h1

'If 25 ♘e4 Black had prepared the devilish 25...♖g6! (but not 25...♖xd5? 26 ♘f6+) 26 ♕f3 ♘f5! 27 ♘c5? ♘h4!' (Averbakh) Of course, a better continuation is 27 ♕f4 (27 ♕c3 b5 28 ♘c5 ♕e7 with equality) 27...♘d6 28 ♘xd6 c3! 29 ♖d3 ♖xd6 30 ♖xc3 ♖xd5 31 ♖c7 ♕b5 with a probable draw.

25...♘c8!?

The correct strategic idea. 25...♖d8 is also good, but Petrosian immediately plays his knight to d6, knowing full well that the knight is the ideal blockading piece (in contrast to the rook or queen – in view of their vulnerability).

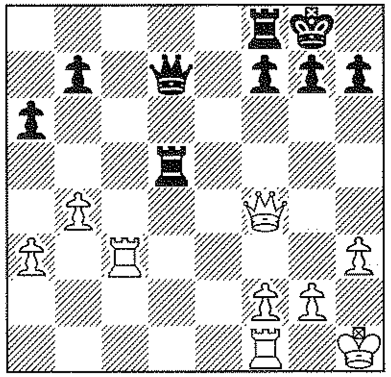
26 ♘e4 ♖g6 27 ♕f4 ♘d6 28 ♘xd6 (hoping for 28...♖xd6? 29 ♕xc4)



28...c3!

'Neither Portisch, nor any of the players present, anticipated this intermediate move.' (Zaitsev) Here Petrosian was already in severe time-trouble: he only had six minutes left for the next 12 moves.

29 ♖d3 ♖xd6 30 ♖xc3 ♖xd5

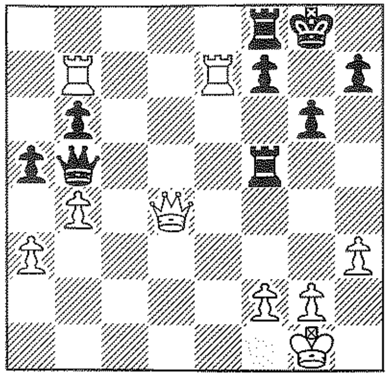


White's advantage is purely symbolic and it was even possible to play 30...b5!? with the idea of 31 ♖fc1 (or 31 ♖e1) 31...♖xd5 32 ♖c7 ♕d6! 33 ♕xd6 ♖xd6, also gaining a draw.

31 ♖c7 ♕b5 32 ♖e1 g6 33 ♔g1 a5

Again aiming for simplification. Also acceptable was 33...♖d7 (Averbakh, Zaitsev), gradually neutralising the opponent's slight initiative.

34 ♖ee7 ♖f5 35 ♕d4 b6 36 ♖b7



36...axb4?

A serious error with the flag about to fall. The commentators unanimously suggested 36...♕c6 37 ♖xb6 (37 ♕xb6 ♕c1+ 38 ♔h2 ♕f4+!) 37...♕c1+ 38 ♔h2 ♕xa3 'with a draw', not noticing that after 39 ♖a7! ♕a2! 40 f4! ♖d5 41 ♕e3 and ♖ba6! White retains an extra pawn and winning chances: 41...♖d2 42 ♕g3 a4 43 ♖ba6, or 41...a4 42 ♖ba6 ♕b3 43 ♕e4! and ♖xa4.

In fact only 36...♕a4! (Hajtun) would have retained material equality and practically forced a draw: 37 ♕xb6 ♕xa3 38 bxa5 ♕xa5, or 37 ♕c3 axb4 38 axb4 ♕d1+ 39 ♖e1 ♕d6.

37 ♖xb6 ♕d5 38 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 39 axb4 h5 40 h4?!

'A move of dubious worth. From the theory of such rook endings it is well known that the inclusion of the moves h4 and h5 is to the advantage of the defending side.' (Zaitsev)

40...♔g7

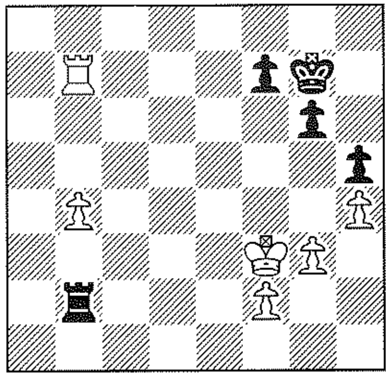
Thus, time-trouble is over, and the whole question is whether or not White can convert his extra pawn.

41 g3?!

The sealed move. 'The night was spent analysing intensively. The strongest continuation was 41 ♖bb7 ♖f5 (releasing the rook from f8)

42 ♖e2! ♖d8 43 ♖b2,' writes Zaitsev, who gives the variation 43...♖d1+ 44 ♔h2 ♖fd5! 45 b5 ♖5d2 with the words: 'The analysis of this position deserves a separate publication, but it is clear that Black's defence involves considerable difficulties.'

41...♖a8 42 ♖bb7 ♖f5 43 ♖e2 ♖a1+ 44 ♔g2 ♖b1 45 ♖e3 ♖b2 46 ♖f3 ♖xf3 47 ♔xf3



'With the pawn on the a-file this position is considered absolutely drawn. Regarding the b-pawn, things are not completely clear. In 1951 Taimanov won a similar endgame against Kopylov, although later Nikolai Kopaev showed that Black could have gained a draw.' (Averbakh)

47...♔h6?!

With the idea of creating a weakness in the opponent's position after ...f7-f6 and ..g6-g5. 'From Portisch's face it was easy to read his thoughts. At this moment he was genuinely dumbfounded and he sank into thought for half an hour. For Portisch and his second, Csom, Black's counterplay on the kingside came as a surprise.' (Zaitsev)

Later a method of defence, guaranteeing Black a certain draw, was found: 47...♔f6! 48 ♔e3 ♔e6 49 b5 ♔e5! 50 b6 ♔e6 51 ♔d4 ♖b1 52 ♖b8 ♔d6 (Kantorovich).

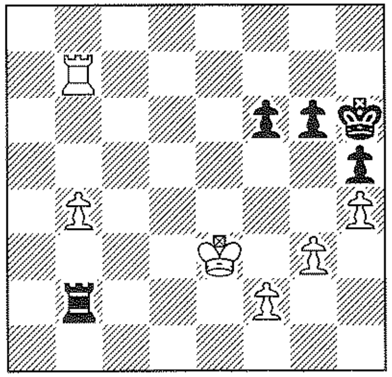
48 ♔e3

After the conclusion of the match Portisch and Csom suggested the more energetic 48 b5!? f6 49 b6 g5 50 ♖b8 gxh4 51 gxh4 ♔g6 52 ♔e4 or immediately 50 ♔e4, although, as Zaitsev writes, 'it would appear that also after this continuation Black's counterplay achieves its goal.'

These variations have been significantly improved by Dvoretsky. Firstly, after 50 ♔e4! gxh4 51 gxh4 ♖xf2 52 ♖c7 (not the only move) 52...♖b2 53 b7 ♔g6 54 ♔d5 ♔f5 55 ♖c5 ♔g4 56 ♔c6 White wins. Secondly, in the event of 50 ♖b8 gxh4 51 gxh4 instead of 51...♔g6 it is stronger to play 51...♖b4!? 52 ♔e3 ♔g6 53 ♔d3 ♔f5 54 ♔c3 ♖b1 55 ♔d4 ♖b2 56 ♔c5 ♖xf2! 57 ♖d8 ♖c2+ 58 ♔d6 ♖b2 59 ♔c7 ♖c2+ 60 ♔b8 ♖c4, or 57 ♖g8 ♖c2+ 58 ♔d6 ♖d2+ 59 ♔c7 ♖c2+ 60 ♔b8 ♖c4 61 b7 ♖xh4 62 ♔c7 ♖b4 with a draw. Moreover, after 48 b5 f6 49 b6 Black has the possibility of 49...♖b4!? (instead of 49...g5) 50 ♔e3 g5, but White too, in turn, has the chance 49 ♔e4! ♖xf2 50 b6 ♖b2 51 ♖b8.

Therefore Dvoretsky's main recommendation after 48 b5!? is the immediate 48...♖b4!, and here, 'in order to evaluate objectively the resulting positions, a detailed analysis is required.'

48...f6 49 ♖b6 ♔g7 50 ♖b7+ ♔h6

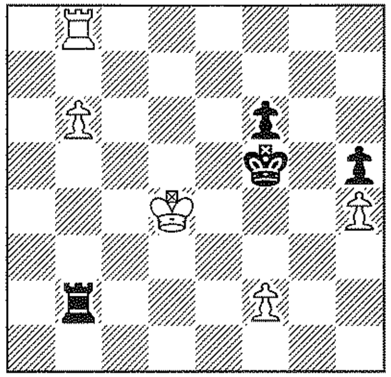


51 ♖b8?!

'Another delay, after which Black could have saved the game. In Kantorovich's opinion, correct was 51 b5 g5 52 ♔d4 gxh4 53 gxh4 ♔g6 (53...♖b4+?! 54 ♔c5 ♖xh4 55 ♖a7 ♖h1 56 ♖a4 h4 57 b6 h3 58 b7 ♖b1 59 ♖b4 ♖c1+ 60 ♔b6) 54 b6 ♖xf2 55 ♖a7 ♖b2 56 ♔c5 ♖c2+ 57 ♔d6 ♖b2 58 ♔c6 ♔f5 59 ♖a4 and wins. However, 54...♔f5! improves the defence and casts doubts on whether White can win.' (Dvoretsky)

51...g5 52 b5 gxh4 53 gxh4 ♔g6 54 b6 ♔f5 55 ♔d4

'White's last hope is to advance his pawn more quickly than the opponent.' (Averbakh) 'After 55 b7 the white king is deprived of a shelter and this leads to a dead draw' (Zaitsev), for example: 55...♖b4! 56 ♔d3 ♔f4 57 ♔c3 ♖b1 58 ♔d4 ♔f3 59 ♔d5 ♔xf2 60 ♔e6 ♖b6+ 61 ♔f5 ♔f3 62 ♔g6 ♔g4 (Kantorovich).



55...♖xf2?!

The result of fatigue. Back in his adjournment analysis Black had intended the simple 55...♔g4! 56 ♖g8+ ♔xh4 57 ♔c5 ♖c2+! (driving the king in front of the pawn, in order to capture on f2 with gain of tempo) 58 ♔d6 ♖d2+ 59 ♔c7 ♖c2+ 60 ♔b8 ♖xf2 61 b7 ♖b2 62 ♔c7 f5 63 b8♕ ♖xb8 64 ♖xb8 f4 65 ♔d6 f3 66 ♔e5 f2 67 ♖f8 ♔g3 68 ♔e4 ♔g2 with a draw. 'But apparently, in this ill-fated game Petrosian was destined to drain the cup of bitterness.' (Averbakh)

56 ♖a8! (Black underestimated this reply)

56...♖b2

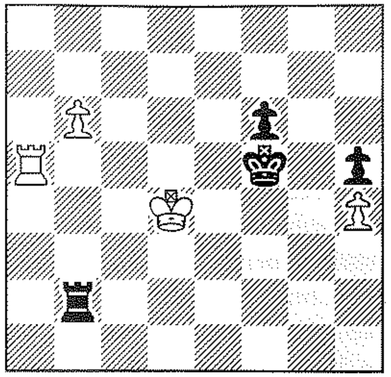
If 56...♖d2+?! 57 ♔c4 ♖c2+ Zaitsev recommends 58 ♔b3 ♖c6 59 ♖a5+ ♔e6 60 ♖a6!, winning. It is no better to play 59...♔g4 60 ♖a4+ ♔h3 61 b7 ♖b6+ 62 ♖b4, or 59...♔g6 60 ♖b5 ♖c8 61 b7 ♖b8 62 ♔c4.

57 ♔c5 ♖c2+

'The murderous ♖a4 was threatened. For example: 57...♔g4 58 ♖a4+ ♔g3 59 ♖b4 ♖c2+ 60 ♔d6 ♖c8 61 ♔e6 and White wins.' (Averbakh)

58 ♔d4 ♖b2 59 ♖a5+

Having repeated moves after severe time-trouble (the second control was on move 56), Portisch came to his senses and continued looking for winning chances.



59...♔e6?!

'It was possible to draw only in a study-like way – 59...♔g4! 60 ♖a4! (60 ♔c5 ♔xh4) 60...♔h3!! (pointed out by Zaitsev) 61 ♔c5 f5 62 ♖b4 ♖xb4! 63 ♔xb4 f4 64 b7 f3 65 b8♕ f2. This is a well-known theoretical position, in which, thanks to his control of g4, Black gains a draw.' (Averbakh) For example: 66 ♕f4 ♔g2 67 ♕g5+ ♔h1 68 ♕f5 ♔g2 69 ♕xh5 f1♕.

It should still have been possible to find this saving continuation! Incidentally, the machine altogether does not realise that this is a draw, and gives check for a very long time, evaluating the position as '+-'.

60 ♔c5 ♖c2+?

The final error. According to Zaitsev, 'Black would also have lost after 60...♔d7 61 ♖a8!' but, as Dvoretsky has discovered, here Black still had a draw: 61...f5 62 ♖h8!? (62 ♖f8 ♔e6! 63 ♔c6 ♖c2+ 64 ♔b7 ♖h2 and ...♖xh4 – K.Müller) 62...f4 63 ♖xh5 f3! 64 ♖f5 f2 65 ♖f8 (65 h5 ♖e2!?) 65...♖c2+! 66 ♔b5 ♖b2+ 67

♔a6 ♔c6! 68 ♖f6+ ♔c5.

61 ♔b5 ♔d6 62 ♔a6 ♔c6 63 ♖a1 ♖c4 64 b7 ♖b4 65 ♖c1+ ♔d7 66 ♖c8 1-0

A famous endgame, which appeared in chess publications right around the world.

The match score became 2-2, not counting draws, and now both grandmasters were one step away from success (remember that the winner was the first to score three wins). It would be interesting to know what the psychological condition of the two players was at that moment. We will compare the observations of their seconds.

Csom: 'Portisch levelled the scores after a grandiose, although far from faultless struggle, which lasted eight and a half hours. On seeing how incredibly tired Portisch was after the game, I very much felt for him. Entering his hotel room, he collapsed on the bed and could only utter: "I'm finished!" This explains his defeat in the 13th game!'

Zaitsev: 'The scores became level, and here a miracle occurred. Petrosian, who had been quite unable to digest his first defeat, was suddenly, only a few hours later, suffering a second vexing loss. By contrast, Portisch, who had arisen like a phoenix from the ashes, was still under the influence of his recent successes and he arrived for the 13th game full of optimistic hopes.'

Game 39

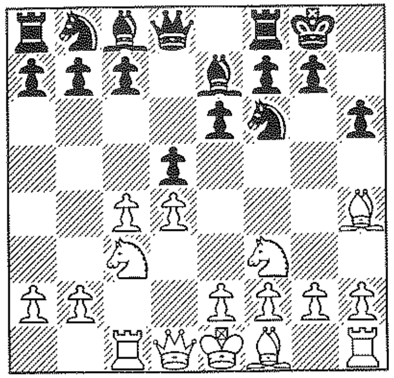
T.Petrosian-L.Portisch

Candidates Match,
Palma de Mallorca 1974, 13th game
Queen's Gambit D53

1 ♘f3 d5 2 d4 e6 3 c4 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♘c3 0-0 6 ♖c1!?

6 e3 is played more often (p.135). 'From this point Portisch began thinking. Petrosian explained this, in particular, by the fact that the Hungarian grandmaster himself likes to play this way against the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation.' (Zaitsev)

6...h6 7 ♗h4



7...b6

Karpov's novelty 7...dxc4, which he said was devised by Polugayevsky (of course, in strictest secret), will be analysed in Volume 5.

8 cxd5

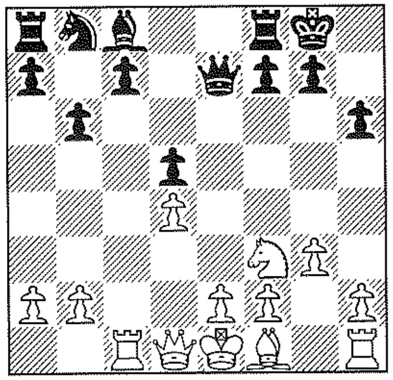
The idea 8 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3!? (Korchnoi-Karpov, 13th matchgame, Baguio 1978) is also discussed in Volume 5.

8...♘xd5 9 ♘xd5

A harmless alternative is 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♕c2 ♗a6!, for example: 11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 e3 (12 ♕xc7? ♘d7!) 12...♗xf1 13 ♔xf1 ♖c8 14 ♔e2 (14 ♕f5 ♕d7!) 14...c5 (Portisch-Spassky, Budapest 1967), or 11 g3 c5 12 ♗g2 ♘d7 (Uhlmann-Portisch, Siegen Olympiad 1970).

9...exd5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 g3!?

Uhlmann's move, which tries to justify 6 ♖c1.



11...♗a6

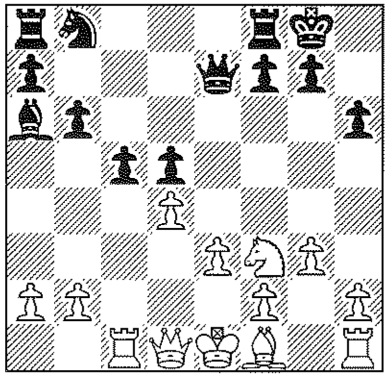
After 11...♗e6 Uhlmann successfully played 12 ♗g2 c5 13 ♘e5! However, in the East Germany-Byelorussia match (1971) Veresov stunned him with the variation 11...♖e8!? 12 ♗g2 ♗a6 13 ♘e5 ♘d7! 14 ♖xc7?! ♖ac8!, and it transpired that 15 ♖xd7? is bad on account of the splendid counterblow 15...♕b4+ 16 ♔f1 ♕xd4! 17 ♘d3 ♖xe2!! (Petrosian), while after 15 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 Black has a comfortable game.

I don't know what Petrosian had prepared against 11...♖e8!? Possibly 12 ♗g2 ♗a6 13 ♘e5 ♘d7! 14 f4!? (Uhlmann-Kurajica, Sarajevo 1981), or 13 e3!? c5 14 ♕a4 ♖c8 15 ♘e5 ♕e6 16 ♖c3 (Smyslov-Portisch, Tilburg 1984; Yusupov-Short, Madrid 1995), or perhaps immediately 12 ♖c3, as Seirawan played against Karpov (London 1982; Hamburg 1982) and Geller (Linares 1983). This last idea was the fruit of Korchnoi's preparation (Seirawan was one of his seconds) for the match with Karpov in Merano (1981).

Ultimately the rook move to e8 was deemed the most accurate and, along with 7...dxc4!?, it has practically put the variation with 6 ♖c1 out of use.

12 e3! (if 12 ♗g2, then 12...♖e8!, transposing into variations already examined) **12...c5**

12...♗xf1 13 ♔xf1 and ♔g2 is advantageous to White.



13 ♗xa6

The critical, sharp reply is 13 dxc5!, as Korchnoi twice played against Karpov in their 1981 Merano match:

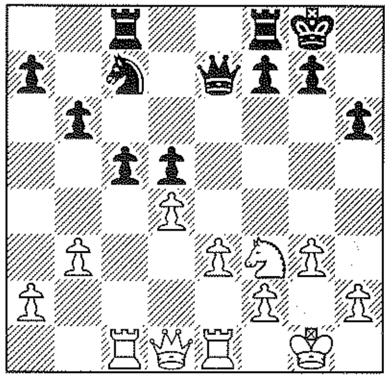
1) 13...bxc5 14 ♗xa6 (14 ♕xd5?! ♗b7) 14...♘xa6 15 ♕xd5 ♘b4 (15...♖ab8!?) 16 ♕c4 ♕f6 (5th game) 17 ♕e2! ♖fc8 (after 17...♘xa2 18 ♖xc5 ♖ac8 19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 20 0-0 ♘c1 21 ♕d2 ♘b3 22 ♕b4! White wins a pawn: 22...♕xb2 23 ♘d4 ♖c3 24 ♕b8+ and ♕xa7) 18 a3 (18 0-0 ♘xa2 with equality) 18...♕xb2! 19 ♕xb2 ♘d3+ 20 ♔e2 ♘xb2 21 ♖c2 ♘a4 22 ♖hc1 ♖c6 23 ♘e5 ♖a6, nevertheless gaining a draw;

2) 13...♗b7!? 14 ♗g2 (not 14 cxb6?! d4!, or 14 c6 ♘xc6 15 ♗g2 d4!) 14...bxc5 15 0-0 ♘d7 16 ♕b3 ♖fb8 (16...♘f6(b6) 17 ♕a3; 16...♗c6 17 ♘d4!?) 17 ♕a3 ♕e6 18 ♖fd1 with a slight but enduring advantage to White (7th game).

13...♘xa6 14 0-0 (14 ♕a4?! ♘b4 15 0-0 ♘d3 Zaitsev) **14...♘c7**

After 14...c4, which is usual in such cases, Black was concerned about 15 b3.

15 b3 ♖ac8 16 ♖e1!?



As in the previous game, White has not gained anything special from the opening (16 ♕d3 ♕e4 with equality – Averbakh). But after this mysterious rook move, Portisch, by his own admission, began to feel uncertain. 'I thought that Petrosian was intending to follow up with ♖e2-c2,' he said at the conclusion of the match.

16...♖fd8 17 h4 ♘e6

During the game Petrosian considered 17...♘e8! and ...♘f6, and reckoned that here Black's chances are even slightly better.

Incidentally, Fritz finds the natural manoeuvre ...♘e8-f6 very quickly: the computer program is tuned to looking for the best squares for the pieces.

18 ♕d3 ♕f6 19 ♔g2 cxd4?!

'My opponent raised his hand to make this, in general, poor move, but then reconsidered,' Petrosian recalled. 'I became agitated and got up from the board. Sensing my frame of mind, Portisch became suspicious and sank into thought, but fifteen minutes later he nevertheless decided on this exchange.'

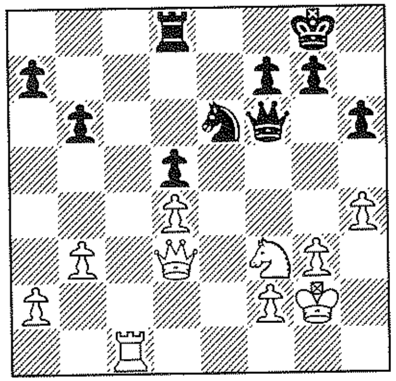
Why? 'Petrosian is a great master of manoeuvring in such situations, and so Portisch's desire to clarify the situation is perfectly natural.' (Averbakh) Of course, it would have been better to maintain the tension in the centre – for example, by 19...♖c7 with equality.

20 exd4

'20 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 21 exd4 followed by ♖e5 or ♕a6 would have given a minimal advantage, but now Petrosian is aiming for more.' (Zaitsev)

20...♖xc1 21 ♖xc1

The key moment of the game and of the entire match.



21...♕f4?!

'Again an impulsive move. Black tries to solve his problems by tactical means. In view of the threats of ...♕e4 or ...♕g4 White is obliged to accept the challenge.' (Averbakh)

The queen move was condemned by all the commentators, and was even called 'probably the most unfortunate move in Portisch's career.' (Hajtun) However, from the purely chess viewpoint, it is by no means a losing move, and it should be condemned only from the psychological point of view.

The calm waiting move 21...♖e8, and if 22 ♘e5, then 22...♕e7! (but not 22...♘xd4? 23 ♘g4), would have maintained approximate equality and would not have given White those chances that he unexpectedly acquired in the game.

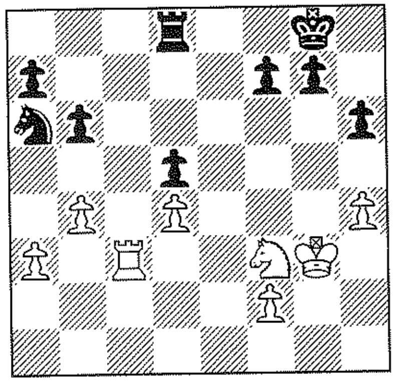
22 gxf4!

This essentially forced pawn sacrifice came as a surprise to Portisch. An underestimation of the opponent's latent resources was always his Achilles' heel.

22...♘xf4+ 23 ♔g3 ♘xd3 24 ♖c3 ♘b4

Petrosian and other commentators recommended the 'drawing' 24...♘b2, assuming that White had nothing better than to pursue the knight after 25 ♖c2. However, in my view, it is stronger to play 25 h5! ♖e8 26 ♘e5 f6 (26...a6 27 ♖c6) 27 ♘g6 ♖e4 28 ♖c8+ (28 f3 ♖xd4 29 ♖c2! ♘d1 30 ♘e7+ ♔f7 31 ♘f5 ♖d3 32 ♖c7+ ♔f8 33 ♖xa7 is also interesting) 28...♔f7 29 ♖c7+ ♔e6 30 ♖xg7 ♖xd4 31 ♖xa7, regaining the pawn and retaining the initiative.

25 a3 ♘a6 26 b4!



According to Csom, it was this move that Portisch did not anticipate when he played 21...♕f4?! He was intending to neutralise White's pressure on the c-file by ...♖d7-c7, but now he was concerned about the threat of b4-b5.

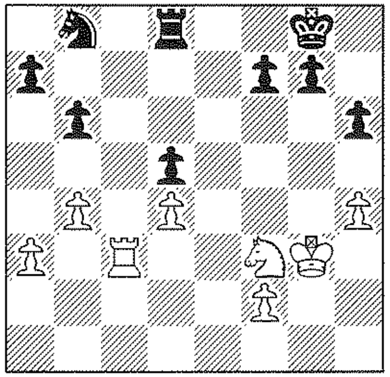
26...♘b8?

Psychology in action! 'The unexpected change in the situation unsettled Portisch and he was unable to defend calmly.' (Averbakh) Black had two better ways to continue:

1) 26...♔h7 27 b5 ♘b8 28 ♖c7 ♖d7! 29 ♖c8 ♖b7 (Averbakh, Zaitsev) 30 ♘e5 ♘d7 (30...g6 31 ♖d8) 31 ♘xf7 ♘f6 32 ♘e5! a6!? (if 32...♘e4+ 33 ♔g2 ♘d6?! 34 ♖d8 ♘xb5, then 35 h5! – with the threat of ♘g6 and ♖h8 mate – 35...g5 36 hxg6+ ♔g7 37 ♖xd5 ♘xa3 38 f4! etc.) 33 a4 axb5 34 axb5 ♘e4+ 35 ♔g4 (35 ♔g2 ♖a7!) 35...♘xf2+ (but not 35...♘d6? 36 ♖d8 ♘xb5 37 h5!, winning) 36 ♔f5 ♘e4! 37 ♔e6 ♘f6 or 37 ♖d8 ♖e7 38 ♖xd5 ♘g3+ with drawing chances;

2) 26...♖d7! (in Petrosian's opinion, the best move) 27 ♖c8+ (27 b5 ♘c7 28 ♘e5 ♖e7 29 ♘c6 ♖e1 with equality – Zaitsev) 27...♔h7 28 b5 ♘c7 29 ♘e5 ♖e7 30 ♘c6 ♖d7 31 ♘xa7 ♘e8! This variation is given by all the commentators. Indeed, after 32 ♖xe8 ♖xa7 or 32 ♖a8 ♘d6 33 a4 ♔g6! Black, by activating his king, can count on a draw.

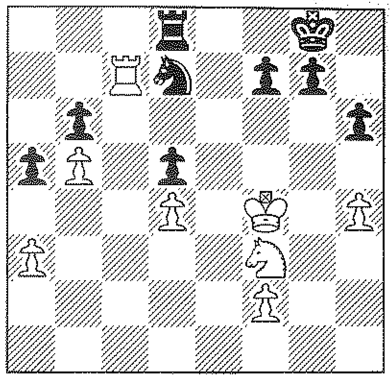
Instead of this Portisch tried to transfer his 'bad' knight to the centre, but as a result he came under severe positional pressure.



27 ♖c7 a5 (27...a6?! 28 ♘e5 f6 29 ♘g6 Zaitsev) **28 b5!**

Fixing the weakness at b6. 'The only way! After 28 bxa5 bxa5 29 ♘e5 f6 30 ♘g6 ♘a6! 31 ♖a7 ♘b8 Black succeeds in gaining counterplay.' (Zaitsev)

28...♘d7 29 ♔f4!



White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn – all his pieces are participating in the offensive! The tenacious defence of such a dangerous and non-standard situation proves to be beyond Portisch's powers.

29...h5?!

The best chance was 29...♘f8 – after the tempting 30 ♖b7 ♖d6 31 ♘e5 ♘g6+?! 32 ♘xg6 ♖xg6 33 ♔e5 'Black has a difficult game' (Zaitsev), but 31...♖f6+! is more accurate, driving back the king. In my opinion, the correct plan is 30 ♖c6! ♘g6+! (not 30...♖b8 31 ♔e5 ♖d8 32 h5! Zaitsev) 31 ♔g4, for example:

1) 31...♖e8?! (a desperate try for counterplay) 32 ♖xb6 ♖e4+ 33 ♔g3 ♘e7 34 ♖b8+ ♔h7 35 b6 ♘f5+ 36 ♔g2 ♖g4+ 37 ♔f1 and the outside passed b-pawn decides the outcome: 37...♘xd4 38 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 39 ♖e8! ♖d1+ 40 ♖e1 ♖d3 41 ♖b1, or 37...♘xh4 38 ♘e5! ♖xd4 39 b7 ♖d1+ 40 ♔e2 ♖b1 41 ♘xf7 ♘g6 42 ♘d6;

2) 31...♖b8 32 ♖d6 f6!? (32...♘e7 33 ♘e5! g6 34 h5) 33 h5! (33 ♖xd5 h5+!) 33...♘e7 34 ♘h4 ♔f7 35 ♘f5 ♖b7 36 a4! (a pretty position!) 36...g6 (not 36...♘xf5?! 37 ♔xf5 ♔e7 38 ♖e6+ ♔f7 39 ♖c6) 37 ♘g3! and Black has a difficult defence: 37...gxh5+ (37...g5 38 ♘f5!) 38 ♘xh5 ♘g8 39 ♔f5 ♘e7+ (39...♔e7 40 ♖xd5 ♖c7 41 ♔g6!) 40 ♔f4 ♘g8 41 ♖xd5

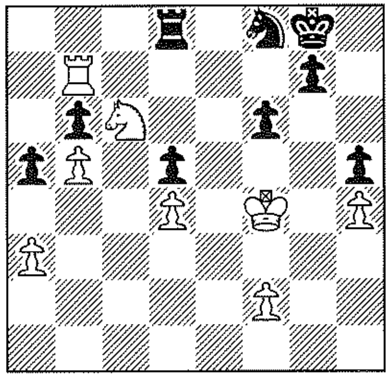
♖c7 42 ♔e4 etc.

30 ♘e5! ♘f8

Now Black is forced to play this, allowing the white knight to go to c6, since the exchange 30...♘xe5 31 ♔xe5 would have led to a lost rook endgame: 31...f6+ 32 ♔f5 (threatening ♔g6; 32 ♔e6 g5 33 ♔xf6 gxh4 34 ♖g7+ ♔h8 35 ♖g5 is also sufficient) 32...♔h7 33 ♔e6 ♔g6 34 ♖c6!, or 31...♔f8 32 ♖c6! f6+ 33 ♔f5! ♖b8 (33...♖e8 34 ♖xb6 ♖e4 35 ♖c6! and b5-b6) 34 ♔g6 ♖b7 35 ♖c8+ ♔e7 36 ♔xg7.

31 ♖b7 f6 32 ♘c6

'Black's position is hopeless. Realising that things had taken an irreparable turn, Portisch became rattled.' (Zaitsev)



32...♘g6+?!

After 32...♖e8! (the last chance) White would still have had to avoid a number of pitfalls – 33 ♔g3! (33 ♖xb6 ♖e4+) 33...♖e2! 34 ♘e7+ ♔h8! (after 34...♔h7 35 ♘xd5 the f6-pawn is under attack) 35 ♘f5! (35 ♘xd5 ♘e6! 36 ♘xb6 ♘xd4 is not as good) with threats on both wings:

1) 35...♖a2 36 ♘xg7 ♖xa3+ 37 f3 ♖b3 38 ♘xh5 ♖xb5 39 ♘xf6 a4 40 ♖f7! ♖b1 41 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 42 ♘d7 and wins;

2) 35...♘e6 36 ♖xb6 g6 37 ♖b8+ ♔h7 38 ♖b7+ ♔h8 39 ♘e3 ♘xd4 40 b6! ♖b2 41 ♘xd5 ♘f5+ 42 ♔h3 and wins;

3) 35...g6 36 ♘e3 ♘e6 (36...♖d2 37 ♘xd5 and ♘xf6) 37 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 38 ♘xf6 ♘f5+ 39 ♔h3 ♖e7 (or 39...♘e7) 40 ♖xb6 with an overwhelming advantage.

33 ♔g3 (the rest is a matter of straightforward technique) **33...♖d6**

It is better to play 33...♖e8 (Zaitsev), but here too after 34 ♖xb6 Black is unable to save the game: 34...♖e1 (34...♖e4 35 f3) 35 ♖b8+ and b6-b7.

34 ♖xb6 ♖e6 35 ♖b8+ ♘f8 (35...♔h7 36 ♖d8!) **36 ♖a8 ♖e1 37 ♘d8**

'White could also have won by 37 b6 ♖b1 38 ♘b4 axb4 39 a4 b3 40 b7 b2 41 ♖xf8+, but Petrosian prefers a more certain way.' (Zaitsev)

37...♔h7 (or 37...♖g1+ 38 ♔f3 ♖b1 39 ♘e6 etc.) **38 b6 ♖b1 39 b7 ♘d7 40 ♖xa5 1-0**

'Petrosian played with the precision of a clock mechanism.' (Hajtun)

Thus Portisch was eliminated from the Candidates cycle, which in the end was won by the 23-year-old Anatoly Karpov, who was then proclaimed world champion in the spring of 1975, when Fischer refused to defend his title.

The difficult match with Petrosian unsettled the Hungarian grandmaster for a time, but in 1975 he began to regain his previous form. In the winter he took first place at Wijk aan Zee, where, incidentally, he won four times (so far, the only others to have achieved this are Euwe, Korchnoi and Anand – I began playing in Wijk aan Zee in 1988 and after three successive victories from 1999 to 2001 I hope that this is not the limit). And at the end of the summer he performed splendidly in the super-tournament in Milan – the city which had been intending at that time to stage the Fischer-Karpov match.

This event with twelve grandmasters was held in two stages. First, an all-play-all tournament: 1. Portisch – 7 out of 11; 2-4. Karpov, Petrosian and Ljubojevic (ahead of Smejkal, Tal, Browne, Andersson, Gligoric. Larsen...). Then semi-final matches Portisch-Ljubojevic (2½-1½) and Karpov-Petrosian (2-2, but Karpov had the superior tie-break coefficient). And in the end, a six-game final: Karpov-Portisch.

The young world champion took the lead, by winning the 2nd game. But then, after two draws, he unexpectedly made a serious mistake in the opening of the 5th game, and Portisch was presented with a real opportunity to level the score in the match (and in the event of it finishing 3-3 he would have been declared winner of the tournament).

Game 40

L.Portisch-A.Karpov

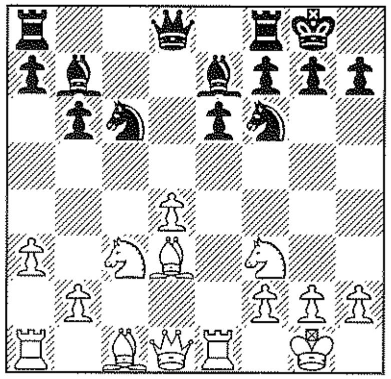
Final Match, Milan 1975, 5th game

Queen's Gambit D42

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 d4 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♘f3 d5 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 b6 10 ♖e1

In the 1st game Black equalised after 10 ♗g5 ♗b7 11 ♖c1 ♘c6 12 a3 ♗e7 13 ♕d3 ♖c8 14 ♖fd1 ♘d5!? 15 ♗xd5 (15 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7 with equality) 15...♗xg5 16 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 17 ♗e4 h6 18 ♕e3 ♖fd8.

10...♗b7 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 a3 ♗e7



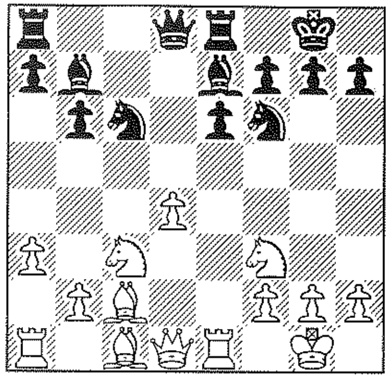
An opening transformation typical of modern chess: from a Nimzo-Indian Defence a *tabiya* has arisen from the Tarrasch Defence Deferred in the Queen's Gambit.

13 ♗c2!?

Here the usual 13 ♗g5 is pointless: 13...♖c8 14 ♗c2 ♖e8 15 ♕d3 g6 16 ♖ad1 ♘d5 leads to equality, since White does not gain a tempo by attacking the rook with 17 ♗h6. Therefore White wants first to play ♕d3, provoking ...g7-g6, and then to play ♗h6 immediately.

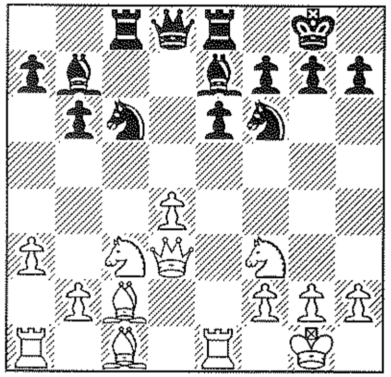
13...♖e8

An interesting alternative is 13...♗a6!, preventing ♕d3. Karpov employed this well-known move against Timman (Wijk aan Zee 1998), although this was after 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♗d3 ♘c6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e1 ♘f6 11 a3 b6 12 ♗c2 – it is psychologically easier to play 12...♗a6! with the undeveloped bishop from c8 than when it has been developed at b7.



14 ♕d3 ♖c8?

'Overlooking White's threat. 14...g6 was essential.' (Portisch) It is strange that Karpov repeated the same mistake he had made (with his king's rook on f8) four years earlier in a game with Smyslov (*Volume 2, Game No.117*). For a certain period he was unfortunate when playing against an isolated d4-pawn.

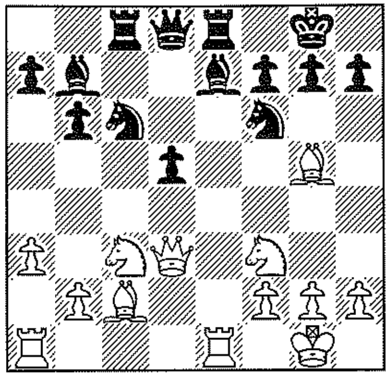


15 d5! exd5

From the practical point of view, possibly the lesser evil was 15...♘a5 16 ♗g5! ♖xc3!? 17 ♕xc3 ♕xd5 (17...♘xd5?! 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♕d3 ♘f6 20 ♖ad1 is inferior) 18 ♖ac1 h6 with some compensation for the exchange, although it is nevertheless insufficient after 19 ♗e3 ♕h5 20 ♗d1!

16 ♗g5!

Karpov had overlooked this move.



16...♘e4

'If 16...g6 White wins by 17 ♖xe7! ♕xe7 18 ♘xd5,' (Portisch) although after 18...♘xd5 19 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7 he still has much work to do.

17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♕xe4 g6 19 ♕h4 h5 20 ♖ad1!?

The obvious move, but 20 ♗b3! would have won quickly, for example:

1) 20...♕c7 21 ♕e4 ♔g7 22 ♗xf7! ♔xf7 23 ♗h6! (Portisch) 23...♕d6 (23...♕d7 24 ♖ad1!) 24 ♕c4+ ♔f6 25 ♘g5! ♘d8 26 ♕h4!;

2) 20...♗xg5 21 ♘xg5 ♖xe1+ (21...♖c7 22 ♕f4! Portisch) 22 ♖xe1 ♔g7 (it is no better to play 22...♕d2 23 ♖d1, or 22...♘e5 23 ♕f4 ♗d5 24 ♖d1! ♗xb3 25 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26 h3) 23 ♗xf7 ♕d2 24 ♘f3 ♕xb2 25 ♗xg6! ♔xg6 26 ♕g5+ ♔h7 27 ♖e6 with a spectacular rout.

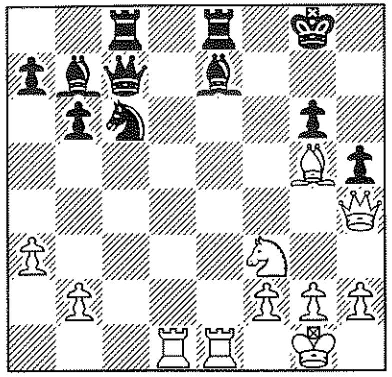
'Of course, I saw 20 ♗b3, but I did not concern myself with the calculation of the variations and after an hour's thought I chose a "prettier", but also weaker continuation.' (Portisch)

20...♕c7 21 ♗xg6!

'It was this tempting sacrifice that diverted me from the correct course. We were already both tired... Alas, at the decisive moment I went wrong.' (Portisch)

Incidentally, there was no simple positional solution for White: if 21 ♗e4, then 21...♗xg5 22 ♕xg5 ♘a5! 23 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 was adequate.

21...fxg6



Judging by Portisch's commentary, White has already missed the win, but this is not so. Here is the real culmination of this dramatic game:

22 ♕c4+?

'If 22 ♖e6 Black defends by 22...♖cd8.' (Portisch) However, the computer instantly finds the winning 23 ♖de1! ♖d6 24 ♕c4! ♖xe6 (there is nothing else) 25 ♖xe6 (25 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 26 ♘h4 is also decisive) 25...♔h8 26 ♕c3+ ♔h7 27 ♕c2 ♖g8 28 ♖xe7+, or 23...♗xg5 24 ♖xg6+ ♔f8 25 ♕xg5 ♖xe1+ 26 ♘xe1 ♘e7 27 ♕f6+! ♔e8 28 ♕e6! ♔f8 29 ♖f6+ ♔e8 30 ♖h6! This is pretty without any inverted commas!

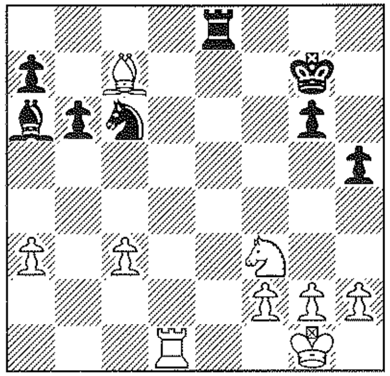
It was also hopeless to play 22...♗f8 23 ♖xg6+ ♗g7 24 ♗f6 ♖e7 25 ♕g5, or 22...♔h7 (22...♔g7? 23 ♕e4) 23 ♖de1! ♘d8 24 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 25 ♗xe7 ♗xf3 26 gxf3 ♘f7 27 ♕f6 ♘h6 28 ♗d6 ♘g8 29 ♕e6 ♕b7 30 f4 etc.

However, 22...♖ed8! 23 ♖de1! ♖d6 is more tenacious, and now (in contrast to the variation with 22...♖cd8) it is wrong to play 24 ♕c4?! ♖xe6 25 ♕xe6+ (25 ♖xe6?! ♘e5!) 25...♔g7 26 ♗xe7 (26 ♘h4 ♗xg5 with equality) 26...♘xe7 27 ♕xe7+ ♕xe7 28 ♖xe7+ ♔f6 29 ♖e3 g5 with good drawing chances. All that remains for White is 24 ♗xe7 ♖xe6 25 ♖xe6 ♘xe7! (but not 25...♘e5 26 ♘e1! ♗d5 27 ♗d6! ♕d7 28 ♖xe5 ♕xd6 29 ♖xh5! gxh5 30 ♕g5+ ♔f7 31 ♕f5+ and ♕xc8, winning) 26 ♖xe7 ♕d6 27 ♘e1! with hopes of nevertheless converting his extra pawn.

22...♔g7 23 ♗f4 ♗a6!

'This move caught me unawares. I had only reckoned on 23...b5, which after 24 ♕c3+ ♗f6 25 ♗xc7 ♗xc3 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 bxc3 would have given White a decisive advantage in the endgame, since the black pieces are idle.' (Portisch) However, even here the win would still not have been easy.

24 ♕c3+ ♗f6 25 ♗xc7 ♗xc3 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 bxc3



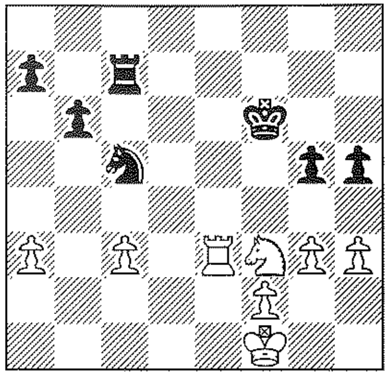
27...♗e2!? 28 ♖e1 (28 ♖d7+ ♔g8!) **28...♖c8! 29 ♖xe2 ♖xc7 30 ♖e6 ♘d8!**

The careless 30...♘a5? would have led to disaster: 31 ♘e5 ♖xc3 32 ♖xg6+ ♔f8 33 f4 ♖xa3 34 ♖h6 b5 35 ♖xh5 ♘c4 36 ♘xc4 bxc4 37 ♖c5 c3 38 ♔f2, or 35...b4 36 ♖h8+ ♔g7 37 ♖b8 b3 38 h4! ♖a2 39 ♔h2 b2 40 h5 and the white pawns are stronger.

31 ♖e3 ♔f6

'White's extra pawn does not bring success, due to the weakness of his queenside pawns. Karpov gains a draw with the confidence of a world champion.' (Portisch) And... not without the help of his opponent! As at the finish of his game with Fischer (*Game No.36*), the distraught Portisch begins to 'drift' and fails to exploit his remaining, albeit not very significant, winning chances.

32 ♔f1 (if 32 ♘d4!? it is possible to play 32...♖c4 33 ♔f1 ♖a4 34 ♘c2 ♘e6, or 34 ♖e8 ♘b7 35 ♖e6+ ♔f7 36 ♖c6 ♘c5, aiming for the exchange of the a- and b-pawns for White's a- and c-pawns) **32...♘e6 33 g3 g5 34 h3 ♘c5**



35 ♘d2

Had the two players exchanged places, it would have been interesting to see how Black would have fought for a draw after 35 ♔e2! ♘a4 36 ♘d2! ♔f5 37 ♘e4, or 35...a6 36 ♘d4 ♘a4 37 ♔d2. In such positions Karpov would torment his opponents right to the last chance.

35...♖d7 36 ♔e2 ♖d5 37 c4 ♖d4 38 ♖e8 h4 39 ♖f8+ ♔e7 40 ♖h8

It was somewhat better to try 40 ♖f5!? g4 41 hxg4 hxg3 42 fxg3 ♖xg4 43 ♖f3, retaining an extra pawn on the kingside.

40...hxg3 41 fxg3 ♖d3 ½-½

This last move was sealed. A draw was agreed on White's proposal: 42 ♖h7+ ♔e6 43 ♖xa7 ♖xg3 44 ♘f3 g4 45 hxg4 ♖xg4.

Thus, Karpov nevertheless won the match (3½-2½), but this did not greatly distress Portisch, who declared: 'I am pleased that I am the first Hungarian chess player to have played a match with a world champion, even if it was not for the supreme title. I am not ashamed of my defeat. The Milan tournament was a major event in my life.'

It was time for the Interzonal tournament in Biel (1976), where three qualifying places for the Candidates matches were contested (as was the case three years earlier, FIDE held two Interzonal tournaments). Here Larsen was victorious, and Portisch again shared 2nd-4th places, this time with Petrosian and Tal. In order to sift out the 'superfluous' one, an additional four-round match-tournament between them was staged.

The former world champions agreed a non-aggression pact: all four of their games lasted not more than 17-20 moves. And since Portisch had lost to Petrosian at the start, to all appearances it was he who had been assigned the role of victim. However, these plans were upset by the following game.

Game 41
M.Tal-L.Portisch
Match-Tournament,
Varese 1976, 2nd cycle
Sicilian Defence B97

1 e4 c5

'The first manifestation of activity – the Hungarian grandmaster rather often defends the Ruy Lopez.' (Tal) Incidentally, in that opening Portisch lost to Tal in Biel and gained a very important draw with him in the 4th cycle of the match-tournament.

2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5

In the game Smyslov-Portisch (2nd matchgame, Portoroz 1971) White seized the initiative after 6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e6?! 8 f4! (a novelty!) 8...♕c7 9 f5 (9 g4!) 9...♗c4 10 ♗f3 a5?! 11 a4 ♘c6?! 12 ♗g5 ♘b4 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♗e2! ♗xb3 15 ♗b5+, but then everyone reverted to 7...♗e7!

6...e6 7 f4 ♕b6!?

A surprise. 'I gained the impression,' writes Tal, 'that in the entire period from Biel to Varese Portisch had been working on this sharp variation and that he had guessed very successfully – since 6 ♗g5 might not have happened: in recent times I have preferred other moves. And one more thing. The tournament situation (Portisch was trailing by half a point) did not demand that his opponent should definitely play for a win, and did not force him to burn his boats. On the other hand, the score of my previous games against Portisch with White (+6=1) as though obliged me to push hard. By excellently exploiting both these factors, Portisch skilfully lured his opponent into a psychological trap – in the variation White has chosen he is obliged to act decisively, and there is no room for hesitation.'

I should add that previously Portisch had played only 7...♗e7 – this was also how his later game with Tal (Niksic 1983) continued: 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 ♘bd7 10 ♕g3 ♘c5 11 ♗d3 h6! 12 ♗h4 0-0 13 ♖he1 ♘h5 14 ♕g4 ♗xh4 15 ♕xh4 ♘xf4 16 ♕xf4 e5 17 ♕h4?! exd4 18 ♘d5 ♕d8 19 ♘e7+ ♔h8 20 ♖f1 (20 e5 ♗g4!!) 20...♗g4!! 21 ♖f6! ♔h7! 22 ♖df1! ♘xd3+ 23 cxd3 (threatening ♖xh6+) 23...♖c8+!! 24 ♘xc8 ♕c7+! 25 ♔b1 ♖xc8...½-½. A fighting draw!

8 ♕d2

8 ♘b3 is much safer and more pragmatic, as was later played against Portisch by many of his opponents, including Spassky (Tilburg 1979), and against me by Topalov (Novgorod 1997) and Leko (Linares 2001).

But could Tal really avoid the pawn sacrifice?! On the contrary, after 7...♕b6 it is probable that he mentally chalked up another point, since he had already gained a number of spectacular wins in this variation. However – and it was this that Portisch had reckoned on! – the value of each move is now very high, and if White's attack should peter out, things will be difficult for him without his 'base' b2-pawn.

8...♕xb2 9 ♘b3

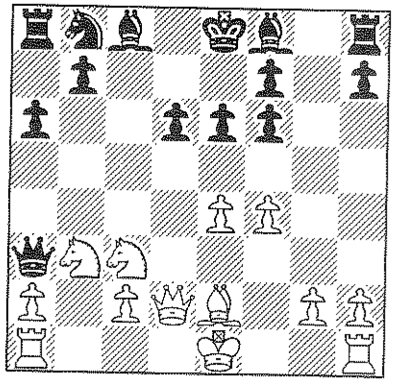
The fashion of those years, stemming from the Spassky-Fischer match. But the main line, known since the times of the games Fischer-Geller (Monaco 1967) and Kavalek-Fischer (Sousse Interzonal 1967), later became 9 ♖b1 ♕a3 10 f5! (10 e5?! – *Volume 2, Game No.121*; 10 ♗e2 or 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♗e2 is more modest) 10...♘c6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 e5!? (13 ♗e2 ♗e7!) etc. In these variations Portisch achieved a score of +7=4 with Black, without any defeats!

9...♕a3

Also possible is 9...♘c6 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♗e2 (11 ♘a4 ♕a3 12 ♘b6 ♖b8 13 ♘c4 ♕a4 is stronger, as in Adams-Gelfand, 3rd matchgame, Wijk aan Zee 1994) 11...d5! 12 ♘a4?! ♕a3 13 ♘b6 d4! 14 0-0 ♖b8 15 ♘c4? ♕b4 16 ♕d1 b5!... 0-1 (Nunn-Portisch, Toluca Interzonal 1982).

10 ♗xf6 (not 10 ♗d3 ♗e7 11 0-0 h6! Spassky-Fischer, 7th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972) **10...gxf6 11 ♗e2**

One of the critical positions. This move occurred in some training games of mine with Magerramov in the late 1970s to early 1980s, where I played White (later this unexpectedly came in useful when playing Black in my world championship match with Short).



11...♘c6

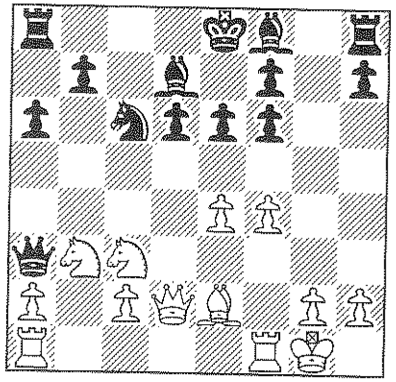
The famous 11th game of the Spassky-Fischer match (Reykjavik 1972) went 11...h5 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 ♔h1 ♗d7 14 ♘b1!? (14 ♘d1 ♖c8 15 ♘e3 ♕b4 16 c3 ♕xe4 17 ♗d3 ♕a4 18 ♘c4 ♖c7 19 ♘b6 ♕a3 is also unclear, Short-Kasparov, 4th matchgame, London 1993) 14...♕b4 (14...♕b2! is better – into the lion's mouth!) 15 ♕e3 d5?! 16 exd5 ♘e7 17 c4! ♘f5 18 ♕d3 h4? 19 ♗g4 ♘d6 20 ♘1d2 f5? 21 a3 ♕b6 22 c5! ♕b5 23 ♕c3! fxg4 24 a4... 1-0

Soon afterwards Tal twice improved on Spassky's idea, gaining the advantage against Robert Byrne (Leningrad Interzonal 1973) by 14 ♕e3!? ♖c8 (14...♘a5 15 ♘d5!) 15 ♘b1! ♕a4 (15...♕b2? 16 ♘1d2 b5 17 a3) 16 c4 ♘a5 17 ♕c3 ♘xc4 18 ♕xf6, and crushing Zilberstein (Latvia-Russian Federation match 1973) with 13 ♘b1! ♕a4 (13...♕b2? 14 a3!) 14 c4 ♕b4 15 ♕e3 ♗g7? 16 a3 ♕a4 17 ♕g3! ♔f8 18 ♘c3! After 13 ♘b1! Black also fails to equalise with 13...♕b4 14 ♕e3 f5 15 exf5 d5 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 c3 ♕e7 18 ♘1d2 (Robatsch-Korchnoi, Palma de Mallorca 1972), or 14...d5 15 exd5 ♘e7 16 ♘c3 ♘f5 17 ♕d3 ♕b6+ 18 ♖f2! ♕e3 19 ♘e4! ♕xd3 20 ♗xd3 ♗e7 21 ♖e1 ♔f8 22 dxe6 ♗xe6 23 ♘ec5 (Mecking-Tal, Las Palmas 1975).

For this reason after 11...h5 12 0-0 I prefer 12...♘d7!? 13 ♔h1 h4! 14 ♗g4 h3! 15 ♗xh3 ♖xh3 16 gxh3 b5 with excellent compensation for the exchange, or 14 h3 ♗e7 with a double-edged game (Short-Kasparov, Riga 1995).

12 0-0 ♗d7

A useful developing move: Black tries to manage without ...h7-h5, not fearing the standard attack with ♗h5.

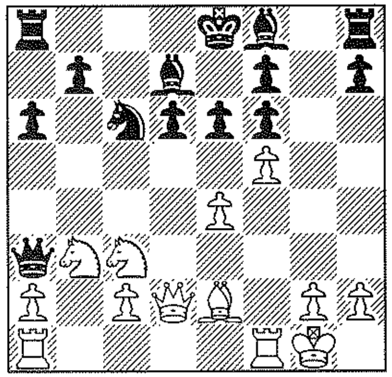


13 f5?!

One senses a certain underestimation of the opponent, as well as an overestimation of

White's chances and the habit of attacking on general grounds. Tal avoids repeating his game with Platonov (Dubna 1973), in which after 13 ♗h5?! ♗g7! 14 ♖f3 0-0 (the bishop at h5 merely hinders the attack) 15 ♖af1?! (15 ♖d1) 15...♘a5 16 ♖h3?! ♘xb3 (16...♖ac8!?) 17 axb3 ♖ac8 18 ♔h1 f5! Black achieved excellent prospects (although in the end he lost).

On this occasion White first wants to break up the enemy king's defences and then play ♗h5 with check. However, Black's knight acquires a convenient transit point at e5 and his king safely withdraws to the queenside. Therefore the waiting 13 ♔h1 was better, when 13...h5 (cf. the note to 11...♘c6) or 13...♖c8 was possible.



13...♘e5! (more energetic than 13...♗e7) **14 fxe6**

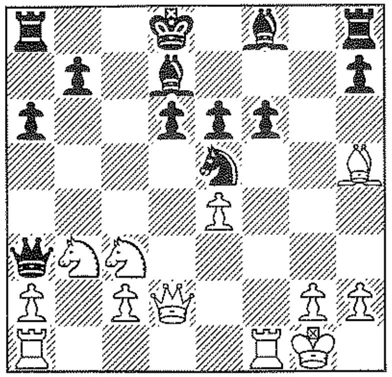
Lepeshkin recommended 14 ♕d4?! ♗g7 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♗h5+, but after 16...♔e7! 17 ♖ad1 a5 and ...♕b4 Black has an obvious advantage.

14...fxe6 15 ♗h5+

White cheerfully follows his plan, driving the king precisely in the direction of where it is aiming – to b8 (after ...♖a8-c8).

15...♔d8!

The triumph of Portisch's preparation; he spent just seven minutes on these 15 moves. After 15...♔e7?! Tal very much liked the spectacular 16 ♖xf6! ♔xf6? 17 ♖f1+ ♔g7 18 ♕g5+ ♘g6 19 ♕f6+ ♔h6 20 ♗xg6 ♗g7 21 ♕h4+ ♔xg6 22 ♕g4+ ♔h6 23 ♖f3 and wins. Objectively, the correct path is 16...♗g7! 17 ♖f2 h6 18 ♖d1 a5! (but not 18...♖hf8? 19 ♘b1!) 19 ♕f4 ♖hf8 20 ♕g3 ♗h8 21 ♖df1 ♖f6 with an unclear game: 22 ♘d4! (threatening ♘d5+!) 22...♕c5 23 ♘f5+! exf5 24 ♘d5+ ♔e6 (24...♔f8 25 ♕h4! is dangerous) 25 ♘f4+ ♔e7 with a draw. However, the move in the game is both more logical, and stronger.



16 ♖ab1

Now 16 ♖xf6?! is unfavourable on account of 16...♖c8! (Lepeshkin), for example: 17 ♖f2 ♕b4! 18 ♕g5+ ♔c7 19 ♕e3 ♗g7, or 17 ♕e3 ♕b4! 18 ♘e2 ♗e7 19 a3 ♕a4 20 ♕b6+ ♖c7 21 ♖f4 ♕c6. It is no better to play 17 ♘b1 (17 ♘e2? ♘c4!) 17...♕b2 18 ♖f2 ♘c4 19 ♕d3 ♕e5 20 ♗e2 ♗h6!

16...♖c8 (with the same threat of ...♕b4) **17 ♘e2**

'The knight aims for an attack on the vulnerable e6-pawn.' (Tal) The recommendation of 17 ♕d4?! 'with good tactical chances' (Lepeshkin) is dubious in view of 17...b5 18 ♖bd1 (18 ♖a1? ♖c4 19 ♕f2 ♗g7) 18...♖c6 19 ♘b1 ♕a4!

17...♗e7

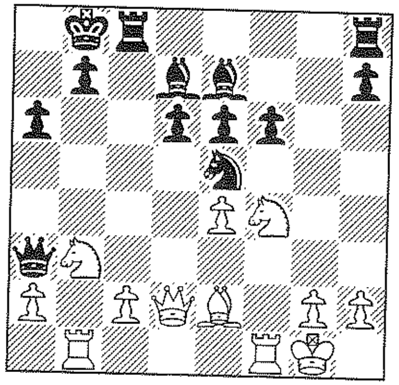
Another possibility is the immediate 17...♔c7!? 18 ♖xf6 (18 ♘bd4 ♔b8) 18...♗g7 19 ♖ff1 ♖hf8 (20 ♕g5 ♖g8!) with a comfortable game, but for the moment Portisch is aiming to retain his extra pawn.

18 ♘f4 ♔c7 19 ♗e2

The return of the 'prodigal son'. 19 ♘d4 would also have maintained the balance, for example: 19...♘c4 20 ♘dxe6+ ♔b8 21 ♕d5 b5 22 ♕d4 ♕e3+, or 19...♔b8 20 ♘fxe6 (20 ♗e2!? ♔a8!) 20...♗xe6 21 ♘xe6 ♕xa2 22 ♘d4 (22 ♕b4 b5) 22...d5, or 20...♕c3 (Lepeshkin) 21 ♕f2!? ♗xe6 22 ♘xe6 ♕xc2 23 ♗e2! ♔a8 24 ♕b6 ♕c6 25 ♕b4 ♖he8.

19...♔b8

After spending about an hour on his last four moves, Portisch has achieved artificial queenside castling. If 19...♘g6, in order, at the cost of the exchange of the powerful knight, to reduce the pressure on the e6-pawn, White would also have gained sufficient counterplay by 20 ♘d4 with the sequel 20...♘xf4 21 ♖xf4 e5?! 22 ♖f3 ♕xa2 23 ♕b4 ♔d8 24 ♖b2 ♕f7 25 ♘f5, or 20...♕c5 21 ♔h1! ♘xf4 22 ♖xf4 ♖hg8 23 ♖h4 etc.



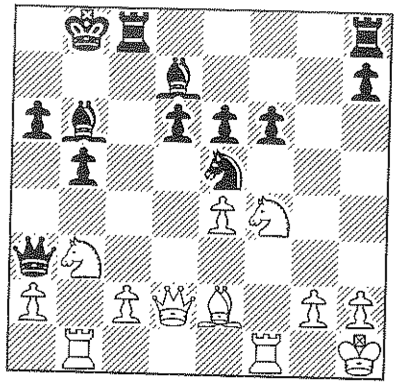
20 ♘a5?

An indication of Tal's poor form: by his own admission, after 20...b5 he was planning 21 c4, but he overlooked the reply 21...♗d8!

Of course, the correct move (suggested by all the commentators) was 20 ♘d4, with a sufficient initiative to maintain the balance: 20...♔a8 (not immediately 20...♕c3? on account of 21 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 22 ♗xa6 ♗c8 23 ♘fxe6 ♖a3? 24 ♗c4! or 23...♔a8 24 ♗d3) 21 ♘fxe6 ♕c3!, or 20...♘c4 21 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 22 ♘fxe6! (22 ♘dxe6 ♖xe4! 23 ♕d5 ♕e3+ 24 ♔h1 b5, and if 25 ♖f3, then 25...♖b4!), and now 22...♕xa2 is dangerous in view of 23 ♘f4! ♖hc8 24 ♔h1! and ♘d5, but after 22...♕c3! 23 ♕xc3 (it is no better to play 23 ♕f2 ♗xe6 24 ♘xe6 ♖xe4 or 23 ♕d3 ♗xe6 24 ♘xe6 ♖hc8) 23...♖xc3 24 ♘f4 ♖c4 25 ♖bd1 ♗c6 the position is a draw.

20...b5! 21 ♘b3 (forced, alas) **21...♗d8! 22 ♔h1 ♗b6**

Thanks to the gift of a couple of tempi, Black has activated his bishop and can look to the future with optimism. However, White's position is still far from hopeless: his knights are capable of displaying truly Chigorin-like agility.



23 ♘h5! ♖c7?!

Tal thought that 23...f5! was stronger. Indeed this would have given Black a more appreciable advantage: 24 exf5 exf5 25 ♘f6 (25 ♗d3 ♖hf8 26 ♘g3 ♘c4!) 25...♗e6 26 c3 (the recommendation 26 ♘d5? is not good on account of 26...♗xd5 27 ♕xd5 ♖xc2 28 ♗d1 ♖c3!, while if 26 ♗d3, then 26...♖cf8! 27 ♘h5 ♗c8 or 27...♘c4) 26...♖hd8! (not 26...♗d8 27 ♘d5! or 26...♖c7 27 ♘d4!) and now:

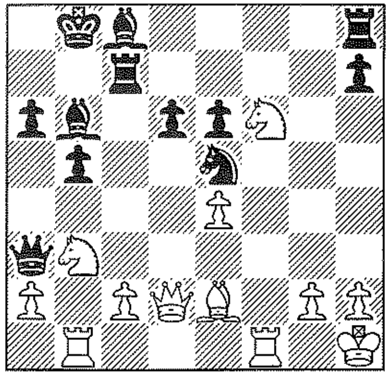
1) 27 ♘d4 ♗f7 28 ♘xb5?! (a desperate chance; 28 ♗xb5?! axb5 29 ♖xb5 ♔a8!) 28...axb5 29 ♖xb5 ♔a7 30 ♖fb1 ♖c6! 31 ♖5b4 ♘c4! 32 ♕e1 ♘a5! 33 ♗f3 ♕xc3 34 ♗xc6 (34 ♕e7+? ♖c7 35 ♕xd8 ♕c1+ 36 ♗d1 ♕d2 and wins) 34...♕xe1+ 35 ♖xe1 ♘xc6 36 ♖a4+ ♔b7 37 ♘xh7 ♘e5 and the two bishops are superior to the rook and pawn;

2) 27 ♘xh7 (at least regaining material) 27...♘g4!? 28 ♗xg4 fxg4 and Black has an excellent attacking position, but the game is not yet over.

The move in the game is more solid, but also slower. What can be done: dynamic play was never Portisch's forte.

24 ♘xf6 ♗c8

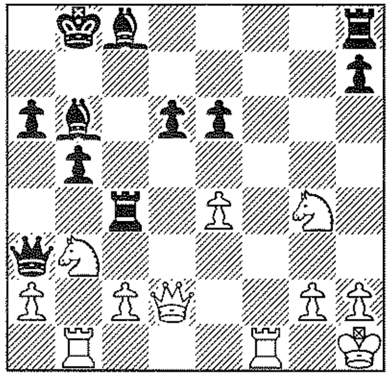
Another important moment.



25 ♘g4?!

In view of the immediate events, better chances of surviving were offered by the arrest of the black queen – 25 c3! ♖d8 (25...♖f8 26 ♖bd1) 26 ♘g4 ♘c4 (if 26...♘xg4 27 ♗xg4 ♖c4, then 28 ♗e2! ♖xe4 29 ♘d4! with the initiative for the pawn) 27 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 28 ♘f6 with the ideas of ♖f3 and ♘d4.

25...♘c4! (an unpleasant reply) **26 ♗xc4** (26 ♕f4?! h5 27 ♘f6 ♘e3 28 ♖f3 ♖c3) **26...♖xc4**



Black's rook and two bishops are very strong, and it only remains for him to bring his queen back into play to achieve complete happiness.

27 ♘f6

Tal considered this move to be 'a mistake, perhaps comparable with 20 ♘a5?' Beforehand he had been intending to play 27 ♖f7?! ♕xa2! 28 ♖a1? (28 ♖c1 ♖d8!) 28...♕xc2 29 ♕xd6+ ♗c7 30 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 31 ♖c1, but just in time he noticed 31...♖d8!! – the weakness of the back rank!

Therefore he recommended 'the only correct continuation' 27 ♘e3?! ♖xe4 (not 27...♖c7? 28 c4!) 28 ♕c3 ♗d4! (28...♖g8? 29 ♕c6! ♗xe3 30 ♕xe4 ♗b7 31 ♕xe3 ♗xg2+ 32 ♔g1) 29 ♕d3 (29 ♕c6? ♗b7 30 ♕d7 was also suggested, but this is bad in view of 30...♗xe3 31 ♖f7 ♗d5 32 ♕c7+ ♔a8 33 ♖bf1 ♖b8! 34 ♖f8 ♗a7!, winning) 29...♗b7 (not 29...d5? 30 ♘c4!! and wins) 30 ♖f7 – 'if I had then lost, it would not have been so distressing.' (Tal) In my view, after 30...♗a8! 31 ♖bf1 ♖c8 32 ♖f8 d5 33 ♖xc8+ ♔xc8 34 ♘g4! ♖xg4 35 ♕d1 ♖e4 36 ♘xd4 ♗b7! Black has every chance of converting his extra pawn.

The variations given by Tal typify his optimistic nature: he was accustomed to playing instinctively, believing implicitly not so much in the objective evaluation of the position, as in his ability to confuse the opponent and get at his king. In fact the 'sluggish' move in the game, defending the e4-pawn, is still comparatively best, although after Portisch's reply White's game begins gradually to go downhill.

27...♕b4! 28 ♕d1

'This makes things easier for Black. Chances of resisting were offered by 28 ♕h6,' writes Lepeshkin, who recommends 28...♖c7, since 'bad is 28...♖xc2 29 ♕g7 ♖d8 30 ♘a1 ♖b2? 31 ♖xb2 ♕xb2 32 ♘d7+ and ♕xb2.' However, after 30...♖f2! (again the weakness of the back rank!) 31 ♘b3 ♖xa2 White's position is unenviable.

28...♕c3! 29 ♖c1

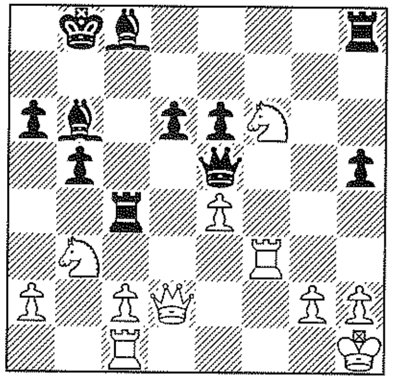
It was not satisfactory to play 29 ♕xd6+ ♗c7 30 ♕e7? (rejecting the difficult defence after 30 ♕d3 ♖d8 31 ♕xc3 ♖xc3) 30...♕e5 31 g3 (or 31 ♘g4 ♕xe4, winning) 31...♗d8! (but not Forintos's move 31...♖xc2?! on account of 32 ♕g7 ♖d8 33 ♕xh7) 32 ♕g7 ♗xf6 33 ♕xf6 ♕xe4+ 34 ♔g1 ♗b7 and wins.

A more lively alternative is the trappy 29 a4!? (very much in Tal's style) 29...♖xa4 (29...bxa4? 30 ♕xd6+; 29...b4? 30 ♕xd6+ ♗c7 31 ♕e7! ♕e5 32 ♘g4 ♕xe4 33 ♘d2 and wins) 30 ♕xd6+ ♗c7 31 ♕e7!? ♕e5 32 ♘g4! (now this move is possible: if 32...♕xe4? White has 33 ♘c5) 32...♕h5! 33 ♖f7 ♖c4 34 h3, although here too Black has a great advantage: 34...♖d8 (also not bad is 34...h6, or even 34...♖xc2 35 ♘d4 ♖c3 36 ♘f3 ♕c5!) 35 ♖xh7 (or 35 ♕f6 ♖xc2 36 ♘d4 ♖c4 37 ♘xe6 ♖d6) 35...♕g6 36 ♘e5 ♕g3, and if 37 ♕xd8 ♗xd8 38 ♘xc4, then 38...♗c7!

29...h5! 30 ♖f3

30 ♕xd6+ is again unfavourable, this time in view of 30...♗c7 31 ♕d3 ♕e5 32 ♕h3 ♗d8 33 ♕h4 ♔a8, for example: 34 ♘d2 ♖a4!, or 34 ♖f3 ♗b7 35 ♕f2 ♗xf6 36 ♖xf6 ♖xe4 37 ♖f8+ ♖xf8 38 ♕xf8+ ♕b8 etc.

30...♕e5 (after the centralisation of his queen Black dominates the entire board: White will always have a bad endgame, but... an even worse middlegame!) **31 ♕d2**



31...♔a8!

Essential prophylaxis. It was premature to play 31...♗c7?! 32 ♘a5 d5 33 g3 ♗xa5 34 ♕xa5 dxe4 35 ♕b6+! ♔a8 36 ♖a3. Also not good was 31...♗d8 32 ♖cf1 ♗xf6?! 33 ♖xf6 ♖xe4 34 ♕f2! ♗b7 35 ♘a5 ♕c5 36 ♕f3 ♗d5 on account of the unexpected 37 c4!! with a powerful attack.

32 ♖d1

32 ♖cf1 ♗c7 33 ♘a5 d5! would have come to roughly the same thing, while the amusing try 32 c3 ♗c7 (32...♗d8!? 33 ♕f2 ♖f8 34 ♘xh5 ♖xf3 35 ♕xf3 ♗g5) 33 ♕d4!? (otherwise 33...d5) 33...♖xd4 34 cxd4 ♕g5 35 ♖xc7 would have been parried by 35...♖f8! 36 ♘d5 ♕h4 or 36 ♔g1 ♔b8 37 ♘h7 ♕h4.

32...♗c7 (preparing the decisive ...d6-d5) **33 ♘a5**

An ill-fated square for the knight! However, it was no longer any better to play 33 ♖df1 d5 34 ♖h3 ♗d8! 35 ♖hf3 dxe4.

33...d5! 34 g3 ♗xa5 35 ♕xa5 ♖xc2 36 ♕b6 (36 exd5? ♕e2; in the time scramble Tal 'forgets' to resign) **36...♕b2** (36...h4!?) **37 ♕g1 dxe4 38 ♘xe4 ♗b7 39 ♖e3 ♖f8 40 a4 ♕e5 0-1**

The outcome of the match-tournament was 1. Petrosian – 4½; 2. Portisch – 4; 3. Tal – 3½. The Candidates quarter-final pairings were made soon afterwards, and Portisch's opponent again, as in 1968, turned out to be Bent Larsen. But whereas nine years earlier the Danish grandmaster had been favourite in the match, now the situation had reversed. Portisch's fruitful analytical work and his constant opening research enabled him (like both Korchnoi and Polugayevsky) to reach the summit of his career between the ages of 40 and 45, whereas the brilliantly talented but superficial Larsen had passed his peak several years earlier, more specifically – after his terrible defeat in the match with Fischer (1971).

The change in the balance of power was already demonstrated in the 1st game, in which to 1 e4 Portisch again boldly replied 1...c5! Larsen did not find anything better than 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 d6 6 f4 e5!? (the prescription of Botvinnik, who played this against 6 ♘ge2 – *Volume 2, Game No.108*) 7 ♘f3 (7 ♘h3! Spassky-Portisch, 13th matchgame, Geneva 1977) 7...♘ge7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗e3 ♘d4 10 ♕d2. After 10...exf4! 11 ♗xf4 ♘xf3+ 12 ♖xf3 ♕b6! 13 ♖b1 ♗e6 14 ♗g5?!

♘c6 15 ♗e3?! ♘e5! 16 ♖ff1 ♘g4 17 ♗f4 c4+ 18 ♔h1 cxd3 19 cxd3 ♗d4! Black gained an obvious advantage and won on the 67th move.

After a quick draw in the 2nd game, Larsen was able to gain revenge in the 3rd, but then the following sharp clash seriously shook his belief in a favourable outcome to the match.

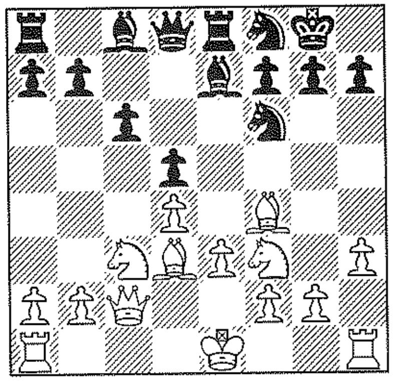
Game 42
L.Portisch-B.Larsen
Candidates Match,
Rotterdam 1977, 4th game
Queen's Gambit D36

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 ♘bd7 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 7 e3 0-0 8 ♗d3 c6 9 ♕c2 ♖e8 10 h3

A clever plan, involving the manoeuvre ♗g5-f4 and, as a rule, queenside castling. The 2nd and 6th games saw the quiet 10 0-0 ♘f8 11 ♖ae1 ♗e6!? with the idea of ...♘6d7.

10...♘f8 11 ♗f4!?

Avoiding 11 0-0-0 ♘e4! with equality.



11...♘g6!?

An old recommendation of the Soviet master Ravinsky – before exchanging the dark-squared bishops by ...♗d6, Black plays his knight to g6 with gain of tempo. True, here the knight may come under attack, and therefore it is hard to say how much worse is the immediate 11...♗d6 12 ♗xd6 ♕xd6, as Reshevsky played long ago against Flohr (Stockholm Olympiad 1937) and Smyslov (Leningrad 1939). These games continued 13 0-0, whereas 13 0-0-0!? is more aggressive and dangerous for Black – the statistics of this continuation are clearly in White's favour.

I should remind you that a similar plan was employed a century ago by Rubinstein – 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♘bd7 5 e3 ♗e7 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 ♕c2 b6 (7...c5!) 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗d3 ♗b7 10 0-0-0 (*Volume 1, Game No.60*), and after him Alekhine, who, incidentally, won a classic game against Reshevsky (Pasadena 1932): 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 d4 ♘bd7 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗f4 c6 7 e3 ♗e7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♕c2 ♖e8 10 h3 ♘f8 11 0-0-0! b5?! 12 ♘e5 ♗b7 13 ♔b1 ♘6d7 14 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 15 ♖c1! ♗d6 16 ♘e2! ♗xf4 17 ♘xf4 and White does not need to play for mate – Black's downfall is caused by the weakness of his queenside. It was on the basis of these ideas that other variations of the Queen's Gambit with queenside castling were also developed.

In the given instance after 13 0-0-0!? numerous different attempts have been made to find a satisfactory defence:

1) 13...b6?! 14 g4 ♗b7 15 g5 ♘e4? (15...♘6d7 16 h4!) 16 ♗xe4! dxe4 17 ♘d2 c5 18 d5 ♖ad8 19 ♘dxe4... 1-0 (Eingorn-Belyavsky, 55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988);

2) 13...b5?! 14 ♔b1 a5 15 g4 (15 ♖c1!?) 15...a4 16 ♖c1! ♗a6 17 ♘e5 ♘6d7 18 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 19 ♘e2! (the familiar Alekhine plan) 19...b4 20 ♘f4 b3 21 ♕xc6... 1-0 (Chuchelov-Roobol, Gent 2000);

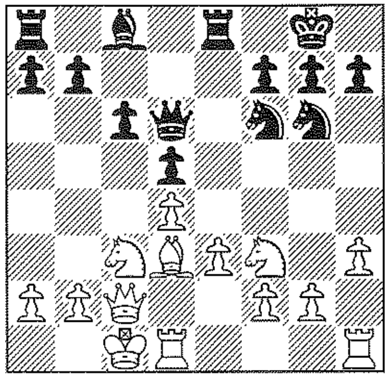
3) 13...a5?! 14 ♔b1 ♗e6 15 g4 (15 ♘e5!? ♘6d7 16 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♘a4 – Baburin) 15...♖ac8 16 ♘g5 b5?! (Topalov-Piket, Linares 1997) 17 ♖c1! and again White's chances are better;

4) 13...♗d7 (taking away this square from the knight at f6) 14 ♔b1 ♖ac8 15 g4 c5! 16 dxc5 ♕xc5 17 ♘d4 ♘e4 with equalising chances (Dreev-Malakhov, FIDE World Championship, New Delhi 2000), but 14 g4! is more energetic;

5) 13...♗e6! 14 ♔b1 ♖ac8 (the most natural plan) 15 g4 (15 ♖c1 ♘6d7 16 ♖hd1 c5) 15...c5 (not 15...♘e4?! 16 ♗xe4! dxe4 17 ♘d2) 16 dxc5 ♖xc5 17 ♘d4 a6. It is possible that White has a minimal advantage, but this is not easy to demonstrate, for example: 18 f3 ♘6d7! 19 ♕h2 ♕e7 with a double-edged game (Gabriel-Lobron, Bundesliga 1996).

12 ♗h2 ♗d6 13 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 14 0-0-0!?

In the 1930s Reshevsky and Makogonov happened to play this, but in modern chess it is undoubtedly Portisch's patent. Only after queenside castling is the knight likely to be worse placed at g6 than at f8.



14...♕e7?!

Essentially a waste of a tempo. After 14...b5?! 15 ♔b1 (15 ♘d2!?) 15...♗d7 (15...a5 16 ♖c1!) 16 ♘d2! ♕e7 17 ♘b3 ♘e4?! 18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♘c5 White wins by purely technical means (Portisch-Ciric, Beverwijk 1968). 14...a5 15 ♔b1 ♕b4?! is also dubious in view of 16 g4 or 16 ♖c1, but not 16 ♘a4?! ♘e4 17 a3 (17 ♘c5!) 17...♕e7 18 ♘b6 ♖b8 19 ♗xe4 dxe4 20 ♘d2 ♗e6 with equality (Portisch-Krogius, Hastings 1970/71).

It is more logical, as in the variation with the knight at f8, to develop the bishop immediately – 14...♗e6! (it is inferior to play 14...♗d7 15 g4! Reshevsky-Monticelli, Syracuse 1934), for example: 15 ♘g5 ♘f8 16 ♔b1 b6 17 g4 c5 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 g5 ♘6d7 with equality (Portisch-Jimenez, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970), or 15 ♔b1!? followed by ♖c1, leaving g2-g4 and ♘g5 in reserve.

15 g4 ♗e6

15...♘e4?! is incorrect in view of 16 ♗xe4 dxe4 17 ♘d2 f5 18 gxf5 ♗xf5 19 f3 ♕e6 (otherwise Black is simply a pawn down) 20 fxe4 ♗xh3 21 ♘b3! ♗g4 (Makogonov – Ilyin-Genevsky, 9th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1934) 22 ♕h2! h5 23 ♘c5 with an obvious advantage. If 15...b6, then 16 ♖dg1!, planning g4-g5 and h3-h4-h5.

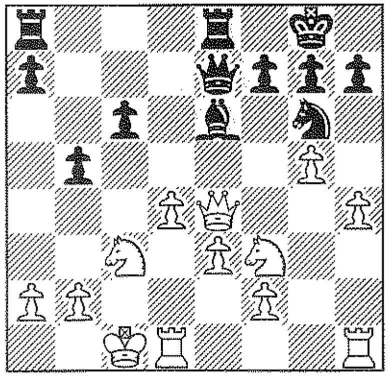
16 g5

A crucial decision – an attempt to exploit the 'extra' move ...♕e7. If 16 ♘d2 or 16 ♘e5, then 16...c5! is unclear. After the prophylactic 16 ♔b1 Portisch may have been concerned about a possible ...♗xa2+, although after 16...♘e4 17 ♗xe4 dxe4 18 ♕xe4 ♗xa2+ 19 ♔xa2 ♕xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 21 d5!, or 16...♖ac8 17 g5 ♘e4 (17...♘d7(h5) 18 ♖dg1!) 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗xa2+ 20 ♔xa2 ♕xe4 21 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 22 h4 ♘e7 23 h5 White has a somewhat better endgame.

16...♘e4!?

Not to Larsen's taste is 16...♘d7 (after 16...♘h5 17 ♖dg1! Black has to think about saving his knight) 17 ♖dg1 c5 18 h4 with the initiative for White, and he prefers to sharpen the play by sacrificing a pawn.

17 ♗xe4 (17 ♘xe4? dxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♗xa2) **17...dxe4 18 ♕xe4 b5** (threatening ...b5-b4 and ...♗xa2) **19 h4!**

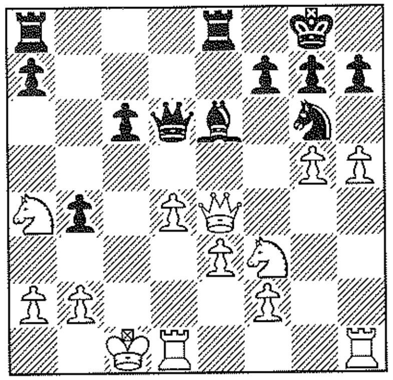


Portisch does not cling to his material advantage, but accumulates positional pluses and threatens an attack on the king.

19...b4 20 ♘a4 ♕d6!?

It stands to reason that Larsen did not give up the pawn in order to try and gain a draw in a tedious, somewhat inferior endgame after 20...♗xa2 21 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 (21...♘xe7? 22 ♘c5 ♗e6 23 ♘e5) 22 ♘d2 ♗d5 23 ♖h3

21 h5! (White, in turn, sacrifices the exchange)



21...♗d5!

The best chance. It is weak to play 21...♘f8? 22 ♕e5! ♕xe5 23 ♘xe5 ♗xa2 24 ♔c2 ♗d5 25 ♖h4, while the tempting 21...♗b3 would only have led to a difficult struggle for equality:

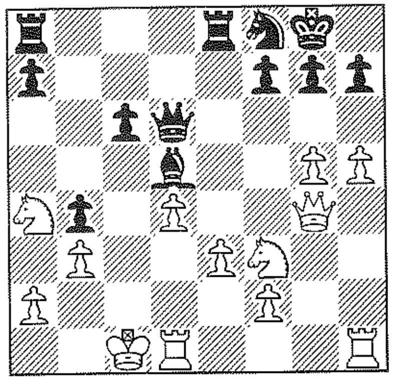
1) 22 ♘e5?! ♗d5 23 hxg6 ♗xe4 24 gxf7+ ♔f8 25 fxe8♕+ ♖xe8 26 f3 (26 ♖h4 ♕d5!) 26...♗g6 27 f4 ♗f5 28 b3 ♕d5 and the queen is not inferior to the armada of white pieces;

2) 22 ♕g4! ♗xd1 23 ♖xd1 (the variation 23 hxg6? ♗xa4! 24 gxf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♕f5+ ♔e7 26 ♘e5 ♕e6 etc., is unfavourable for White) 23...♘f8 24 ♘c5!, and 24...♘e6? is dangerous in view of 25 ♘e4 ♕d5 26 ♘e5! ♖f8 (26...c5? 27 ♘f6+!) 27 ♔b1! ♔h8 (27...c5? 28 h6!) 28 ♕f5 with a very strong attack: 28...♖ad8 29 h6 g6 30 ♕f6+ ♔g8 31 f3 ♖de8 32 ♖h1 (threatening 33 ♕g7+!! ♘xg7 34 ♘f6+, mating) 32...♕d8 33 ♘xc6 and wins.

However, after 24...♖e7!? 25 ♘h4 g6 26 ♘e4 ♕e6! 27 ♘f6+ ♔h8 Black would have forced the exchange of queens and could have counted on a draw, despite the great power of the white knights.

22 ♕g4 ♘f8 (there is nothing else: 22...♘e7? 23 ♘c5 or 22...♗e6? 23 ♕g2) **23 b3**

Of course, not 23 ♔b1? ♗e4+ 24 ♔a1 ♕d5. We have now arrived at the turning point of the game.



23...♕e6?

An unexpected lapse, typical of the later Larsen: Black suddenly offers the exchange of queens, which he has only just avoided. Meanwhile, he had two acceptable continuations:

1) 23...♘d7!? 24 ♖he1 (24 ♖h4 ♖ac8! 25 ♔b2 c5 26 ♘d2 c4!, or 26 dxc5 ♘xc5 27 ♕xb4 ♘xa4+ 28 ♕xa4 ♕c5! 29 ♘d4 ♖e6! 30 ♕d7 ♕c3+ 31 ♔b1 ♗xb3! 32 axb3 ♖a6 33 ♕xc8+ ♕xc8 34 ♘c6! ♖xc6 35 ♖hd4 ♕f8! 36 ♖d8 ♖c5 37 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 38 f4 h6! with a probable draw) 24...f5!? 25 gxf6 (25 ♕h3 c5!) 25...♘xf6 26 ♕f5 ♖f8 27 ♘d2 ♘d7 28 ♕g5 ♖xf2 29 ♖g1 ♖f7 30 e4 ♗e6 31 ♕e3 ♖af8 with a somewhat inferior, but defensible position;

2) 23...f5! 24 ♕xf5 (24 gxf6? ♕xf6 25 ♖h3 ♗e6 is bad, while if 24 ♕h3, then 24...♘d7! and ...c6-c5 with good counterplay) 24...♘d7 (24...♗e4!? 25 ♕h3 ♕d5) 25 ♕g4 ♕f8! (stronger than 25...♕e6 26 ♕xe6+ ♖xe6 27 ♖h3 ♖f8) 26 ♕xd7 (26 ♖h3 ♗e6) 26...♗xf3 27 h6 g6 28 ♘c5 ♖ad8 and then ...♖d5 with equality.

Only with this kind of complicated play could Black have justified his gambit idea.

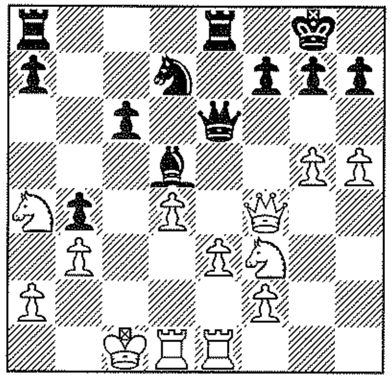
After missing the possibility of ...f7-f5, he comes under positional pressure.

24 ♕f4!

The placing of the queens has changed to White's advantage. He is no longer satisfied with the better ending after 24 ♕xe6 ♘xe6 25 ♖h3 ♗xf3 (at least regaining the pawn) 26 ♖xf3 ♘xg5 27 ♖f5 ♘e4 28 ♖g1! ♖ad8 29 ♘c5 ♘xc5 (29...♘c3 30 ♔c2!) 30 ♖xc5 ♖d5 31 ♖g5 etc.

24...♘d7 25 ♖he1

With the threat of e3-e4. In principle, 25 ♔b2!? is more solid – not so much preventing the ...♗xb3 sacrifice as preparing the important ♖c1, directed against the undermining move ...c6-c5: 25...♖ac8 (weaker is 25...f6 26 ♖hg1, or 25...f5 26 ♖h4! and ♖c1) 26 ♖c1 c5 27 dxc5! ♗xf3! 28 ♕xf3 ♕e5+ 29 ♔b1 ♘xc5 30 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 31 ♖xc5 ♕xc5 32 ♖g1 ♖c8 33 ♕e4, remaining a pawn up.



25...♗xb3?

An attempt to confuse matters in a difficult position, but objectively the losing move. Of course, it also bad to play 25...c5? 26 e4, 25...f5 26 ♘h4, 25...♗e4 26 ♔b2 with the idea of ♖c1, or 25...♗xf3 26 ♕xf3 c5 27 dxc5 ♖ac8 28 ♖d5 ♘b6 (28...♕e7 29 ♕f5!) 29 ♘xb6 axb6 30 ♔b1 bxc5 31 ♖c1.

However, 25...♖ac8! was much more tenacious, since White would not achieve anything with either 26 e4?! ♗xb3 27 axb3 ♕xb3 28 ♘b2 c5!, or 26 ♔b2 ♗xf3 (26...c5? 27 e4) 27 ♕xf3 c5 28 h6 g6 29 ♖c1 c4! 30 bxc4 ♖xc4 31 ♕b7 ♖b8 32 ♕xa7 b3! 33 a3 ♖bc8 with equalising counterplay.

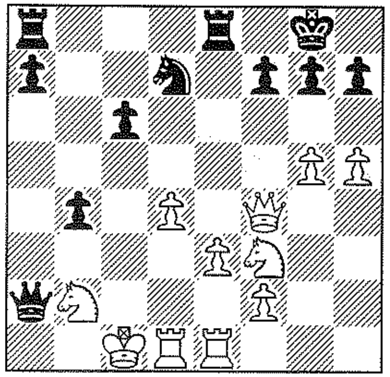
After 25...♖ac8! the commentators recommended 26 ♘d2! c5 27 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 28 dxc5 ♖xc5+ 29 ♔b2, 'retaining all the advantages of his position', but after 29...♖ec8 30 ♕xb4 (30 ♖c1 ♕c6; 30 ♔a1 a5) 30...♕e7! these advantages could have proved insufficient.

26 axb3 ♕xb3 27 ♘b2

White quite easily parries the opponent's impulsive attack and then sets about converting his extra piece.

27...♕a2

It is hopeless to try both 27...♖ac8 28 ♔b1 (28 ♘d2!?) 28...c5 29 d5, and 27...a5 28 g6! fxg6 29 hxg6 hxg6 (29...h6 30 ♘d2 ♕a2 31 ♕f5 ♘b6 32 ♘bc4 ♘xc4 33 ♕f7+ and ♕xc4, or 31...♕e6 32 ♕xe6+ ♖xe6 33 ♖g1 ♘f8 34 ♘d3 etc.) 30 ♔b1! a4 31 ♖d3, or 30...♖f8 31 ♕g3 a4 32 ♘d2 ♕d5 (32...♕e6 33 ♘d3 b3 34 ♖g1) 33 ♘d3 a3 (33...♖f6 34 ♖c1) 34 ♕xg6 ♖f6 35 ♕e4.



28 ♕f5! c5! (avoiding 28...♖ad8 29 ♕b1, Black sacrifices a second piece) **29 ♕xd7 cxd4**

Forintos and other commentators pointed out that it was also bad to play 29...c4 30 ♕a4, 29...♖ac8 30 d5 ♕a1+ (30...c4 31 ♕a4) 31 ♔c2 b3+ 32 ♔c3 ♕a5+ 33 ♔d3, and 29...♕a1+ 30 ♔c2 b3+ 31 ♔c3 cxd4+ 32 ♘xd4 ♖ec8+ (32...♖ac8+ 33 ♘c6 ♕a5+ 34 ♔xb3 ♕b5+ 35 ♔a2); however, here the 'winning' 33 ♔d3 ♕xb2 34 ♖b1? ♕c3+? 35

♔e2 was recommended, although after 34...♖c3+! 35 ♔e4 ♕xf2 Black saves the game. By contrast, the pretty 33 ♘c6! was condemned on account of 33...♕a5+ 34 ♔xb3 ♖ab8+ 35 ♔c2 (35 ♘xb8?? ♖c3 mate) 35...♕b5, although 36 ♖d6! ♕xb2+ 37 ♔d3 ♖b3+ 38 ♔e4 etc. wins easily.

30 ♖xd4 ♖ac8+ 31 ♖c4

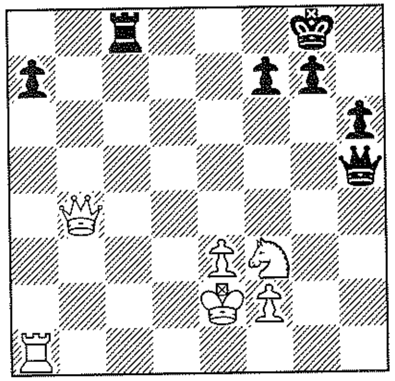
A useful exchange. The alternative is 31 ♔d1 ♕xb2 32 ♖d2 ♕b3+ (32...♕a3 33 ♔e2) 33 ♔e2 ♕c4+ 34 ♕d3.

31...♖xc4+ 32 ♘xc4 ♕xc4+ 33 ♔d2 ♕a2+ 34 ♔d1 ♖f8 35 ♕d2 ♕a5 36 ♔e2

By giving up the g5-pawn, White creates certain technical problems for himself. The machine advises the 'greedy' 36 ♖g1!, for example: 36...♖d8 (36...f6 37 ♕b2 ♕d5+ 38 ♔e2) 37 ♘d4 ♕a1+ (37...♖d5 38 h6!) 38 ♕c1 ♕a4+ (38...♕a2 39 ♕c7!) 39 ♔e1 b3 40 ♕b2 ♕a5+ 41 ♔e2 ♕a6+ 42 ♔f3 ♕b7+ 43 ♔g4 ♕e4+ 44 ♔h3 and wins.

36...♖d8 37 ♘d4 ♕xg5 38 ♕xb4 ♕xh5+ 39 ♘f3 h6 40 ♖a1 ♖c8

The time control had been reached and the game was adjourned here.



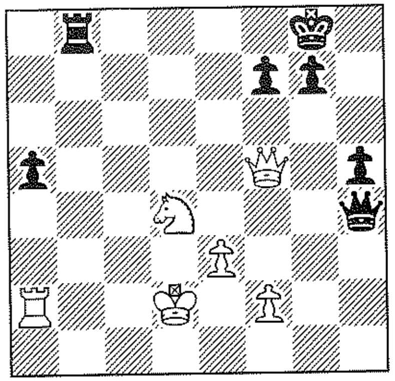
41 ♕b1!

The sealed move, which combines defence with attack. The computer, which does not know any fear, gives preference to 41 e4!? and examines the sharp variations with 41...g5! 42 ♖a5. But a human player intuitively does not want to split up the f2 and e3 pawn pair, since every pawn is worth its weight in gold in such positions: the game cannot be won with a knight alone!

41...a5 42 ♖a4 ♕c5

If 42...♖c5 White has the strong response 43 ♖e4! ♕f5 44 ♖e8+ ♔h7 45 ♕xf5+ ♖xf5 46 ♖e7!, or 43...♖f5 44 ♖e8+ ♔h7 45 ♕e4 g6 46 ♖d8! a4 (46...♖f6 47 ♖d5) 47 ♖d7 ♔g7 48 ♖b7 a3 49 ♖a7, but 42...♕d5!? 43 ♕d3 (43 ♘d4 ♖c4 44 ♖a1 ♖b4 is also not altogether clear) 43...♕c5! came into consideration.

43 ♘d4 ♕h5+ 44 ♔d2 ♕h4 45 ♕f5! ♖b8 46 ♖a2 h5



47 ♕f4!

Solid play: by offering the exchange, which would be fatal for Black, White drives back the enemy queen. Another decisive alternative was the computer solution 47 ♔e2!? g6 (47...a4 48 ♖xa4 ♖b2+ 49 ♔d3) 48 ♕xa5 ♕g4+ 49 ♔d3 ♕g1 50 e4 h4 51 ♔e2 h3 52 ♕e5! ♖d8 53 ♕f6 ♕g4+ 54 ♔e3, or 49...♕d1+ 50 ♕d2 ♕f1+ 51 ♕e2 ♕b1+ 52 ♖c2 h4 53 ♕f3 ♖b2 54 ♔d2.

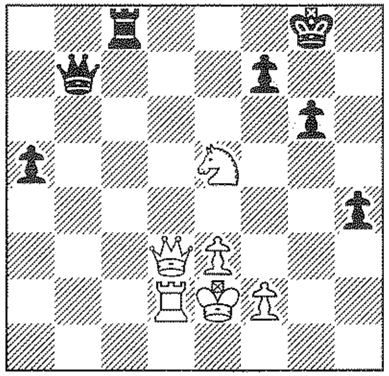
47...♕d8 (47...♕xf4 48 exf4 ♖b4 49 ♔c3, or 48...♖a8 49 ♖a4 h4 50 ♔e3 and wins) **48 ♔e2 ♕b6 49 ♕f5 ♕a6+ 50 ♕d3 ♕a8 51 ♕c4 ♕e4 52 ♕c6 ♕b1 53 ♕c2 ♕b6 54 ♘f3 ♖d8 55 ♘d4 ♖b8 56 ♕d3 g6 57 ♖c2 ♕b1** (intending ...♖b2) **58 ♘f3! ♕b7**

Now if 58...♖b2? White would win by 59 ♕d8+ ♔h7 60 ♘g5+ ♔h6 61 ♘xf7+.

59 ♘e5 ♖c8

Black's last, desperate chance was 59...a4!? 60 ♘xg6? fxg6 61 ♕xg6+ ♕g7 62 ♕xh5 a3 with the desired draw. The correct plan is 60 ♘d7! ♖a8 61 ♘f6+.

60 ♖d2 h4



61 ♕d5!

Persisting in offering the exchange of queens. Again the reckless 61 ♘xg6? would have unexpectedly led to a draw: 61...h3! 62 ♕d6 ♕b5+! (this is simpler than 62...h2? 63 ♘e7+ ♕xe7 64 ♕xe7 h1♕ 65 ♕g5+ ♔f8 66 ♕xa5) 63 ♔f3 ♕h5+, or 62 ♖d1 ♕b2+ 63 ♔f1 ♕b7! and 64...h2.

61...♕a6+ (61...♕xd5 62 ♖xd5 and wins) **62 ♔f3 ♕f6+ 63 ♔g2 ♕f5 64 ♘f3! ♕f6**

Or 64...♕g4+ 65 ♔h2 ♕g7 66 ♖d4! Black's position is completely hopeless and it is largely through inertia that he continues to resist.

65 ♕xa5 h3+ 66 ♔g3 ♕c6 67 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 68 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 69 ♕h4 f6 70 ♕xh3 ♕d6+ 71 ♔g2 ♕d5 72 ♕g4 ♕c6 73 ♔g3 ♕c1 74 ♕d7+ ♔h6 75 ♔g2 (75 ♕d8!) **75...♕a1 76 ♕e8 g5 77 ♘d4 ♕b1 78 e4 g4 79 ♘f5+ ♔g5 80 ♘e3 1-0**

On this occasion the quarter-final matches were simply played to the best of 12 games, and, by winning three more White games with two draws as Black, Portisch defeated Larsen ahead of schedule by the score of 6½-3½ (also significant is the final outcome of their many years of rivalry: +26-14=15 in Portisch's favour).

For the first time in his life the Hungarian grandmaster reached the Candidates semi-finals, where he met ex-world champion Boris Spassky in a match of 16 games (Geneva, summer 1977). The times had long since passed when Spassky was one of Portisch's most difficult opponents. At this time they were equally matched, and in fact Portisch twice took the lead, but at the very finish he nevertheless was second best (6½-8½).

Three years later, after sharing 1st-3rd places with Petrosian and Hübner in the Interzonal tournament in Rio de Janeiro (1979), Portisch again clashed swords with Spassky, this time in the quarter-final (Mexico, spring 1980). This was the most hard-fought match of that entire cycle! It was the best of 10 games, and in the very first Portisch won, with Black moreover, in his opponent's favourite set-up – the Closed Variation of the Sicilian (cf. *Game No.72*, note to Black's sixth move). In the 9th game Spassky drew level and 'normal time' ended with the score 5-5. Four additional games also ended in draws – 7-7. And Portisch went forward to the semi-final, thanks to the new and, to put it mildly, strange FIDE rule, by which preference was given to the player who had gained more wins with Black.

In the semi-final he lost to Hübner (4½-6½), but even after this setback Portisch did not give up hope of breaking through to the chess summit. He participated in three more Candidates events, qualifying for these from the Interzonal tournaments in Toluca (1982), Tunis (1985) and Szirak (1987). Amazing stability!

Portisch's contribution to opening theory is reflected in the book on him by Hajtun. It only remains for me to add that outstanding researchers such as Portisch, Polugayevsky and Korchnoi (an account of whom will be given in Volume 5) effectively worked for future generations, by bringing closer the start of a new era in chess.

Petrosian's Lessons

Two and a half months after his win over Portisch in the 1974 quarter-final, Petrosian lost his semi-final match to the rising Viktor

Korchnoi. Then on two further occasions, in 1977 and 1980, he tried his hand in the Candidates cycles, after confidently qualifying from the Interzonal tournaments. But, as ill luck would have it, both times, in the quarter-final, he found standing in his path his former friend, but by then implacable opponent – the disgraced Viktor Korchnoi. On one occasion, discussing the world championship match in Baguio (1978), Petrosian said thoughtfully: 'If I had the same ambitions as Korchnoi, I would be the eternal champion.'

But in an interview in 1977, to the question 'when did you play better – as world champion or now?' he replied: 'Of course, when I was the champion. But I played the strongest chess of my career in the period from 1958 to 1963, i.e. in the years when I was fighting for the chess crown. I was inspired by the struggle itself, but when a person has achieved his desire, his ardour cools. This is inevitable. As you grow older you become sated, and the sharpness of your feelings is gradually erased.'

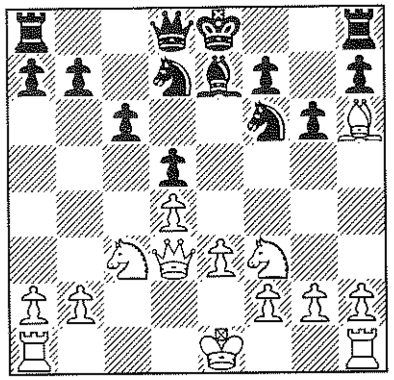
I have included in this book the following instructive game from Petrosian's period as champion, for the reason that it is the direct forerunner of my game with Portisch, played 21 years later in a stage of the World Cup in Skelleftea. It is a rare instance of the complete matching of the pawn structure, with identical material and... result! But the main point of this example is to show how chess ideas are passed on from one generation to another.

In both cases there was the seemingly thoroughly studied 'Carlsbad' structure, and both times the player with Black surprised their peacefully-inclined opponent with effectively one and the same plan.

Game 43
M.Bobotsov-T.Petrosian
Lugano Olympiad 1968
Queen's Gambit D36

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 c6 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 7 ♕c2 g6 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♘bd7! (this is more subtle than 10...0-0 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 b4) **11 ♗h6**

This move is hardly obligatory. 11 0-0 is better, but in principle this is not so important, since in any case the same kinds of position arise. Those interested in this topic can be referred to the 2nd game of my match with Andersson (Belgrade 1985).



11...♘g4! 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 0-0 ♖e8 14 h3 ♘f6 15 ♘e5 ♘b6!

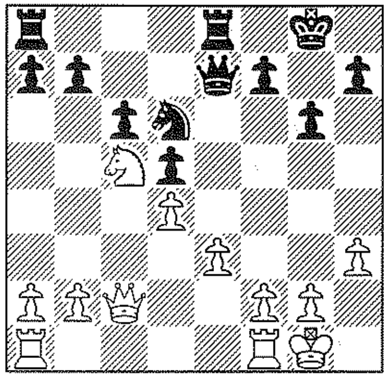
An original and very deep positional idea. Black avoids the exchange of the 'good' knight at e5, and moves his knight to the 'bad' square b6. But in fact, the knight is predatorily eyeing the c4-square, in anticipation of the standard minority pawn attack b2-b4-b5. And in general, after the exchange of the light-squared bishops, Black has play aimed at exploiting the weak light squares in the opponent's position. As for the e5-knight, let it stand there for the moment...

16 ♗g5?! (this merely provokes further exchanges, which, strangely enough, turn out to favour Black) **16...♘e4! 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 ♕c2 ♘d6! 19 ♘a4 ♘bc4** (it was simpler to play 19...♘xa4! 20 ♕xa4 f6, immediately reaching the desired position) **20 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 21 ♘c5 ♘d6**

Now the structure in question has arisen.

Surprisingly, Black already has some positional advantage: White's usual play on the queenside – the minority pawn attack – has come to a standstill (he cannot play b2-b4-b5, since Black always has ...a7-a6), whereas some rather unpleasant tests await him on the kingside. There is also a long-term factor: Black, paradoxical though it may seem, has the better pawn structure. But why?! – both sides' pawns appear to be good. For the reason that it is much easier for him to build up an attack against the opponent's pawn base! Whereas usually in the 'Carlsbad' formation it is just the opposite, and it is White who succeeds in generating an attack, which is why it is generally considered that the pawn structure is better for him.

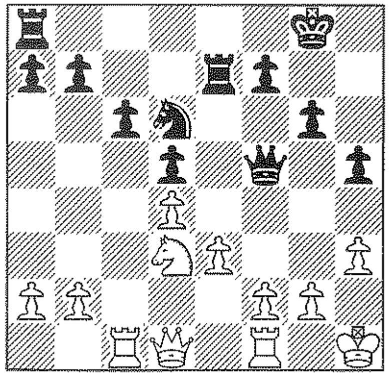
Petrosian demonstrates an original *exception to the rules*. The key role here is played by the sentry knight at d6, suppressing any attempts with b4-b5. Under its watchful eye Black can calmly prepare an advance of his kingside pawns.



22 ♖ac1

It is hard playing when you can't see a plan that is even slightly active. Bobotsov begins marking time, avoiding the 'hole-forming' 22 b4 and a2-a4. But I remember that when I was annotating the aforementioned game with Portisch, I recommended the cumbersome manoeuvre of the knight to c3, even though it involved losing a mass of tempi, in order nevertheless to be able to play b4-b5. It is only with the break-up of Black's queenside that White can obtain any real targets to attack.

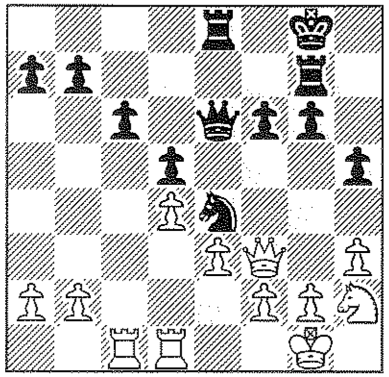
22...♕g5! 23 ♕d1 h5 24 ♔h1 ♖e7 25 ♘d3 ♘e4 26 ♘c5?! (26 b4) **26...♘d6 27 ♘d3 ♕f5**



28 ♘e5?! f6 29 ♘f3 ♖g7! (with the threat of ...g6-g5-g4) **30 ♘h2**

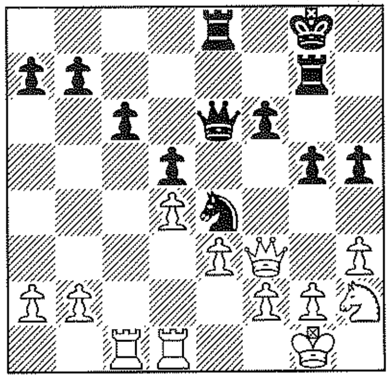
Completing the inglorious march of this once powerful knight. In the meantime Petrosian has unhurriedly strengthened his position and his advantage is now obvious.

30...♖e8 31 ♔g1 ♘e4 32 ♕f3 (32 f3 also has obvious drawbacks) **32...♕e6 33 ♖fd1**



33...g5!

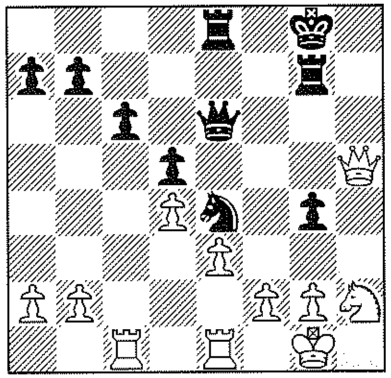
An energetic pawn sacrifice, although in the given instance it was possible to manage without it. But this is again an instructive moment: the 'cautious' Petrosian gives up a pawn! This means that the position is already so ripe for decisive action, that Black does not begrudge giving up one of his infantrymen. In contrast to modern computers, which consider such sacrifices to be blunders, even at that time a strong player realised that preparatory moves such as 33...♕f7 (followed by ...g6-g5), even though not bad, were no longer necessary.



34 ♕xh5 f5

A strong attack on the king now develops, with White's extra pawn not playing any role. Bobotsov loses very quickly, but it seems to me that it is already impossible to find a satisfactory defence here.

35 ♖e1 g4 36 hxg4 fxg4



37 f3

After this move Petrosian flamboyantly traps the queen. 37 ♕h4 would seem to be more tenacious, but the 'human+machine' tandem easily discovers the elegant 37...♖g6! (37...♖f8 38 ♖f1) 38 ♖f1 (or 38 f3 gxf3 39 ♘xf3 ♖h6 40 ♕f4 ♖f8 41 ♕e5 ♕g4!) 38...♔g7 39 f4 ♘d6 40 ♕e1 ♘f5 41 ♖c3 ♖h8! (41...g3?! 42 ♘f3 ♖h8 43 ♘g5) with a mating attack.

37...gxf3 38 ♘xf3 (also bad was 38 ♕xf3 ♖f8 39 ♕e2 ♖f2! 40 ♕xf2 ♘xf2 41 ♔xf2 ♕g6) **38...♖h7 39 ♕e5 ♕c8 40 ♕f4 ♖f8 41 ♕e5 ♖f5 0-1**

Perhaps not the most outstanding game, but an instructive one: the subtle and non-routine positional idea employed here enriched the treasury of strategic skills. Two decades later I was able to employ the same idea.

Game 44
L.Portisch-G.Kasparov
World Cup, Skelleftea 1989

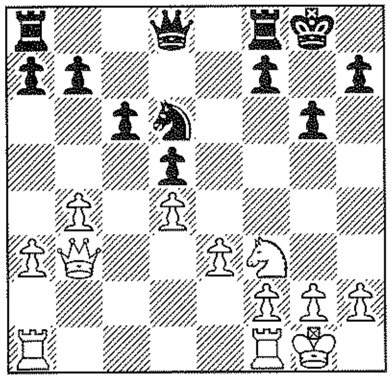
Queen's Gambit D36

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 c4 e6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 c6 6 ♕c2 ♘a6 7 a3 ♘c7 8 ♗g5 g6!? 9 e3 (9 e4 dxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♗g7 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 h4 ♗f5 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 h5 ♖e8 15 ♗d3 ♗g7 is hardly dangerous for Black) **9...♗f5 10 ♗d3** (10 ♕b3 ♖b8) **10...♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 ♗e7 12 0-0 0-0 13 b4**

Or 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 b4 ♕e7 with equality.

13...♘e4! 14 ♗f4! (14 ♗h6?! ♖e8, and now 15 ♘xe4? dxe4 16 ♕xe4 ♗f8 17 ♕f4 ♘e6 is bad) **14...♘xc3 15 ♕xc3?** (careless play; the correct path was 15 ♗xc7! ♕xc7 16 ♕xc3 with equality) **15...♗d6! 16 ♗xd6 ♘b5! 17 ♕b3 ♘xd6**

A familiar picture. Portisch was faced with the same problem as Bobotsov: what to play next?

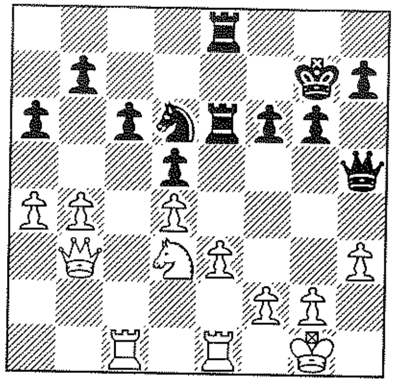


18 a4 a6! (18...a5?! 19 b5 cxb5 20 ♕xd5!) **19 ♘e5?!** (19 g3! was correct) **19...♖e8 20 ♖fe1 ♕g5!**

Following Petrosian!

21 h3?! (21 g3) **21...♔g7 22 ♕c2 ♖e6 23 ♖ac1 ♖ae8 24 ♕b1** (24 ♕d1!?) **24...♕h5! 25 ♕b3 f6 26 ♘d3**

The 'Bobotsov-style' attempt to return closer to the king – 26 ♘f3 g5 27 ♘h2 – would have made for a rather pitiful spectacle.

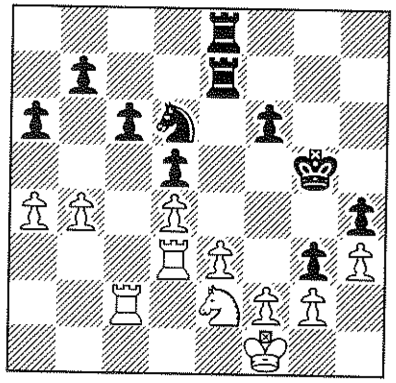


26...g5 27 ♕d1 ♕g6 28 ♕c2 ♖6e7! 29 ♖ed1 (29 ♘c5) **29...h5 30 ♕b1?!** (30 ♘e1 ♕h6!) **30...h4 31 ♕c2 g4** (Black's attack develops like clockwork) **32 ♘f4?!**

Fearing a collapse, Portisch seeks a queen exchange. If 32 hxg4 ♕xg4 33 ♘f4, then 33...♔h6 34 ♔h2 ♖g8 35 ♖h1 ♖e4 36 g3 ♘f5!

32...♕xc2 33 ♖xc2 g3! 34 ♖d3 (34 fxg3 ♘f5!) **34...♔h6 35 ♔f1 ♔g5 36 ♘e2**

Or 36 ♖e2 ♖e4!, then ...♘f5 or ...♘c4.



36...♘c4! (and now the c4-square: White is unable to defend all his weaknesses) **37 ♖cc3 ♘b2 38 ♖d2 ♘xa4**

The rest is a matter of straightforward technique.

39 ♖b3 ♘b6 40 ♘g1 (or 40 fxg3 ♘c4) **40...♘c4 41 ♘f3+ ♔h5 42 ♖dd3 a5! 43 bxa5 ♖a8 44 ♖d1 ♖xa5 45 ♖e1 b5 46 ♖e2 ♖a1+ 47 ♖e1 ♖ea7 48 fxg3 ♖xe1+** (or 48...hxg3 immediately) **49 ♔xe1 ♖a1+ 50 ♔e2 hxg3 51 ♘e1 ♖a2+ 52 ♔d1 ♖d2+ 53 ♔c1 ♖e2 54 ♔d1 ♖xe3 55 ♖xe3 ♘xe3+ 56 ♔e2 ♘f5 57 ♘c2 ♘h4 58 ♘b4** (58 ♔f1 ♔g5 59 ♘b4 ♔f4 60 ♘xc6 ♔e4) **58...♘xg2 59 ♔f3 ♘h4+ 60 ♔xg3 ♘f5+ 61 ♔f4 ♘xd4 62 ♔e3 ♘f5+ 0-1**

Studying these two games, you will see how hard things were for White, who ended up in an unusual positional impasse. Bobotsov played altogether without a plan, simply not knowing what to do, but Portisch, a far stronger player, also experienced obvious discomfort. This is a striking example of Petrosian's skill in subtly noticing and effectively exploiting the long-term factors of the position.

From the late 1970s onwards it became increasingly difficult for him to play at full power, and he made many draws. But when circumstances obliged, when he was seized with the fervour of the struggle – Petrosian's true strength would make itself felt. Since, with the years, natural positional understanding does not disappear, and he was still capable of giving his all in two or three games per tournament.

At the age of 16 I was fortunate to play together with Petrosian in my first international tournament (Banja Luka 1979). He looked after me in a fatherly way and created a good frame of mind. We talked a lot, not only about chess, and analysed and discussed the games we played. As Alexander Nikitin, who was my trainer for many years, justly writes, 'the tournament brought together a youth and a highly-experienced ex-world champion, and over the next five years, while Tigran was still alive, Garry and I learned much from the wise Master, going to him for creative discussions.' Indeed, I derived much from Petrosian's very valuable experience, which I found useful in my battle for the chess crown. His deep philosophical approach to everything connected with chess helped to develop staunchness of spirit, and to overcome the most tense situations.

Tigran Vartanovich also taught me some unforgettable lessons in our games, played in Moscow and Tilburg in 1981. They vividly demonstrate Petrosian's amazing ability to defend cramped positions and, unexpectedly for the opponent, switch to a counterattack. And yet initially everything went very well for me! At 18 years of age I was a kind of light-minded d'Artagnan, who was galloping eagerly towards Paris, but who along the way suddenly encountered the hardened and cunning 'stranger from Meung'...

Game 45

G.Kasparov-T.Petrosian

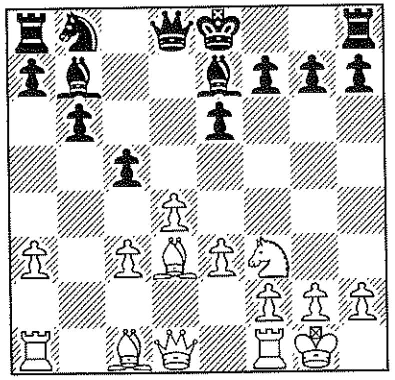
Moscow 1981, 8th round

Queen's Indian Defence E12

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 a3 (in the footsteps of Petrosian!) **4...♗b7 5 ♘c3 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 e3 ♗e7 8 ♗b5+ c6 9 ♗d3 ♘xc3**

This is safer than 9...c5 (*Game No.14*).

10 bxc3 c5 11 0-0



11...0-0

It is more accurate to play 11...♘c6 12 ♗b2 (retaining a choice between e3-e4 and c3-c4) 12...♖c8! 13 ♕e2 0-0 14 ♖ad1 cxd4! (after 14...♕c7?! rather than 15 e4 ♘a5!, White should play 15 c4! with the strong threat of d4-d5, Kasparov-Portisch, Niksic 1983) 15 cxd4 ♗f6 16 e4 ♘a5 with a double-edged game. In my youth, I always thought that White has on obvious advantage here, but games from the last few years have not confirmed this.

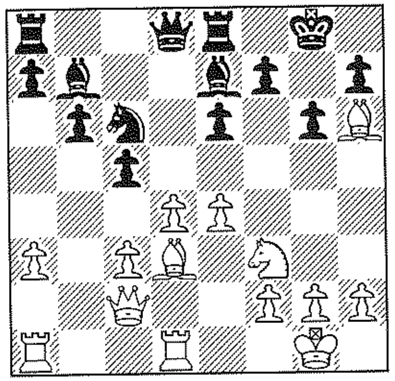
12 ♕c2! (forcing Black to weaken his king's defences) **12...g6**

After 12...h6 13 e4 ♘c6 14 ♗b2 ♖c8 15 ♕e2 ♘a5 16 ♖ad1 cxd4 17 cxd4 White also has some advantage (Ribli-Hort, Germany 1991).

13 e4 ♘c6

The 10th round game Polugayevsky-Petrosian went 13...♕c7?! 14 ♕e2 ♖d8 15 h4! ♘c6 16 ♗e3 ♗f6?! 17 e5 ♗g7 18 h5 with an attack. After 18...♖d7 19 hxg6 (19 ♖ad1!?) 19...hxg6 20 ♖ad1 cxd4 21 cxd4 ♕d8 22 ♗e4 ♘e7? (22...♖b8 was more tenacious) 23 ♘g5 ♘f5 24 ♕g4! ♗d5 25 ♗xf5! gxf5 26 ♕h5 f6 27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 28 ♘h3! ♕c7 29 exf6 ♕xf6 30 ♗g5 ♕f7 31 ♘f4 White soon won.

14 ♗h6 (14 ♗e3!?) **14...♖e8 15 ♖fd1**

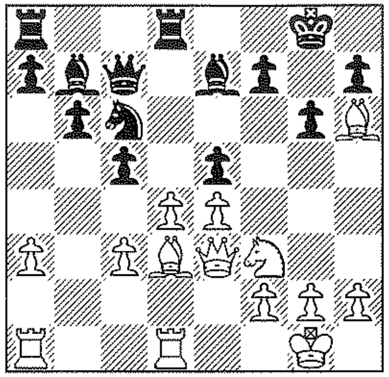


15...♕c7

Possibly it made sense for Black to part with the exchange: the endgame after 15...cxd4!? 16 cxd4 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♗b5 ♕xe4 19 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 21 ♖d7 a5 22 a4 (22 ♗e3 b5 23 ♖c1?! is parried by 23...♗xa3 24 ♖cc7 ♗b2! 25 ♖xf7 h5) 22...♗c5 promises him every chance of a draw.

16 ♕e2 ♖ed8 17 ♕e3! (in connection with e4-e5 and h2-h4-h5, White's position looks menacing) **17...e5!**

If 17...♖d7, then 18 ♗f4! ♕d8 19 ♗b5 is unpleasant. At the cost of positional concessions, Petrosian suppresses the incipient attack.



18 d5

On this move I spent... 58 minutes! I very much wanted to exploit the opening of the a2-g8 diagonal by playing 18 ♗c4?! exd4 19 cxd4 cxd4 20 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 21 ♕b3+, but after 21...♔e8 22 ♕g8+ (22 e5 ♗f8!; 22 ♖ac1 ♕d6!) 22...♔d7 23 ♕xh7 ♔c8 24 ♕xg6 ♗c5 nothing worthwhile would have come of it. A whole hour was wasted in vain, and I soon had cause to regret this.

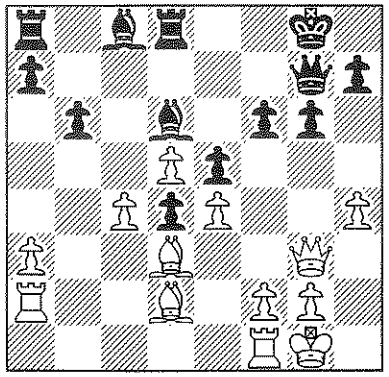
18...♘a5 19 c4

The weakening of the d4-square allows Black more significant counter-chances than 19 ♘g5!? c4 20 ♗e2, although here too it is not easy for White to gain any real advantage: 20...♗c8 21 ♕g3 f6 22 ♘f3 ♘b3! (it is inferior to play 22...♗f8?! 23 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 24 ♘d2! and h2-h4-h5) 23 ♖a2 ♘c5 24 ♘d2 b5 with a complicated struggle – 25 a4 ♘xa4 26 ♘xc4 a6 27 h4 ♗f8.

19...♘b3 (Yusupov and Dvoretsky suggest 19...f6!? 20 h4 ♗a6 21 ♘d2 ♗f8 and a possible ...♘b7-d6) **20 ♖a2 f6 21 h4 ♗c8?!**

The immediate 21...♗f8! would have equalised (Yusupov, Dvoretsky). Now White succeeds in keeping his initiative alive.

22 ♖b1! ♘d4 23 ♘xd4 cxd4 24 ♕g3 (the thematic f2-f4 is now on the agenda) **24...♗f8 25 ♗d2! ♗d6 26 ♖f1 ♕g7**



27 a4?!

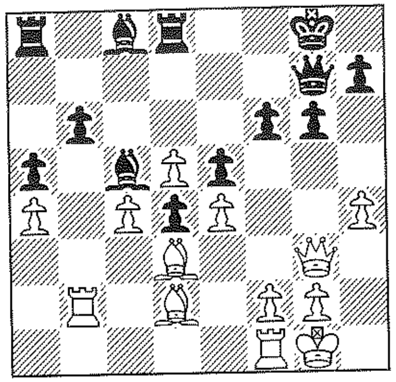
A second front! But in Petrosian's opinion, this is an inaccuracy: 'White should not have made such a serious weakening of his queenside.' However, after 27 f4 Black had the reply 27...♗d7 28 fxe5 (28 ♕h2 ♖f8 29 ♗b4 ♕e7!) 28...♗xe5 29 ♗f4 ♖f8 30 ♖af2 ♖ae8 with a solid defence.

The correct solution was the paradoxical 27 ♗b4! (Yusupov, Dvoretsky). By preventing ...♗d7, White carries out f2-f4 in a more comfortable situation: 27...♕e7 28 f4!, or 27...♗a6 28 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 29 f4 etc.

27...a5!

Fixing the weakness at a4. Now White's task is far more difficult, but I realised this only later, whereas during the game I was merely staggered by the boldness of my opponent, since I was sure that Black would be unable to hold out against the combined pressure on the b-file and on the kingside. At that time I used to think in concrete, tactical terms, whereas for Petrosian it was long-term, strategic...

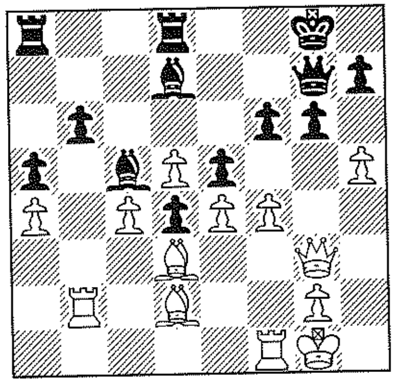
28 ♖b2! ♗c5 (28...♖b8? 29 ♖fb1 ♗c5 30 ♗xa5 and wins)



29 f4 ♗d7

29...h6 is also interesting, for example: 30 h5 g5 31 fxg5 fxg5 32 ♔h1 ♖f8 (Petrosian) 33 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 34 ♗e2 ♗d7 with equality, or 30 ♕e1!? ♖a7! (not 30...♗d7? 31 fxe5 fxe5 32 ♕c1! ♔h7 33 ♗xh6! or 32...♗a3 33 ♗xh6! ♗xb2 34 ♕g5 ♕h7 35 ♖f6 and wins) 31 ♕b1 ♖b7 32 fxe5 (32 ♗c1!?) 32...fxe5 33 ♖b5 ♔h7! (Yusupov, Dvoretsky).

30 h5!

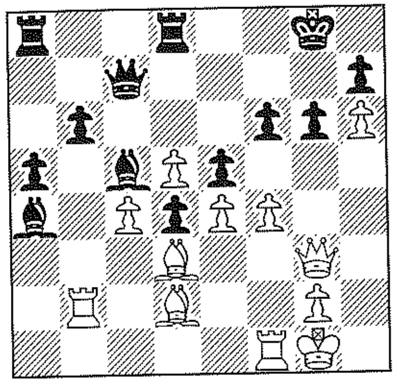


30...♗xa4?

The more dangerous pawn should have been taken – 30...gxh5 31 ♕h4 ♗g4 32 fxe5 fxe5 33 ♗g5 ♖f8! (33...♖e8 34 ♗f6!) 34 ♗f6 (if 34 ♖bf2 ♖xf2 35 ♖xf2 Black has a choice between 35...♖e8 36 ♗f6 ♕g6! recommended by Yusupov and Dvoretsky, and 35...♖f8 36 ♗f6 ♖xf6! 37 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 38 ♖xf6 ♗d7 with equality) 34...♕h6 35 ♖bf2 ♖ae8 with approximate equality: it is wrong to play 36 d6? ♗xd6 37 c5 ♗xc5 38 ♗c4+ ♗e6 39 ♗xe6+ (39 ♖f5? ♗xc4 40 ♖g5+ ♕g6 41 ♕xh5 ♔f7! and wins) 39...♖xe6 40 ♖f3 d3+ 41 ♔h2 d2 42 ♖g3+ ♕g6, so White must play 36 ♕g3 ♕e3 37 ♗xe5 ♖xe5! 38 ♕xe5 ♗b4! 39 c5 ♗e1 40 ♕g5+! ♕xg5 41 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 when he only has perpetual check (Yusupov, Dvoretsky).

Apart from 31...♗g4 the idea of grandmaster Viorel Bologan also comes into consideration: 31...♖f8!? 32 ♕xh5 ♗xa4 33 fxe5 fxe5 34 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8! 35 ♗h6 ♕g6 36 ♕xg6+ hxg6 37 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 38 ♔f1 ♗d7 39 ♔e2 a4 with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

31 h6 ♕c7



Petrosian was relying on the solidity of his position and was hoping subsequently to exploit his passed a-pawn, but it turns out that White's attack is too strong.

32 f5?!

Tempting, but 32 fxe5! fxe5 33 ♗g5 ♖f8 34 ♗f6 was correct – White's attack is irresistible, as shown by the following analyses, by me, Timman, and Yusupov with Dvoretsky,:

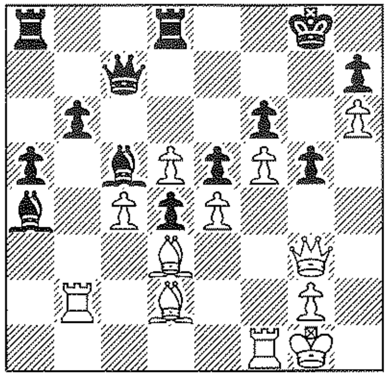
1) 34...♖xf6 35 ♖xf6 ♖f8 36 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 37 ♖f2+! ♔g8 38 ♖f6 ♗d6 39 ♕g4! and wins;

2) 34...♗d6 35 ♖bf2 ♖f7 36 c5! bxc5 (36...♕xc5 37 ♗xe5 ♖xf2 38 ♖xf2 ♗xe5 39 ♕xe5 ♕c1+ 40 ♗f1 ♕xh6 41 d6! or 37...♗xe5 38 ♕xe5 ♖e8 39 ♕g5 and ♖f6!) 37 ♗c4 ♖af8 38 ♗xe5!! ♗xe5 39 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 40 d6! and wins (cf. *New in Chess* 1986 No.4);

3) 34...♖ae8 35 ♖bf2 ♗d7 (35...♗d6 36 ♖f5! ♗d7 37 ♖g5) 36 ♗g7! (this is simpler than my suggestion 36 ♔h2 – cf. *New in Chess* 1987 No.5) 36...♖xf2 (36...♖f4 37 ♗xe5!) 37 ♕xf2 ♗c8 38 d6! ♗xd6 39 c5 and wins.

It was impossible to calculate all these variations at the board, especially when in time-trouble, and I chose what seemed to me to be a more forcing continuation.

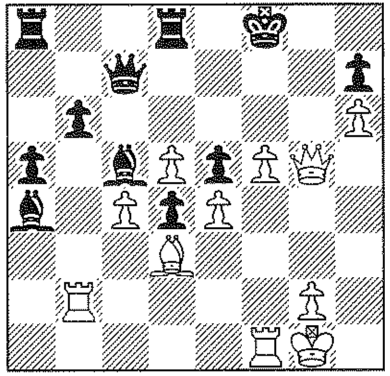
32...g5



33 ♗xg5! (there is nothing else) **33...fxg5?**

In the event of the cool 33...♔f7! (I had underestimated this defence) White would have had to be satisfied with a solid positional advantage after 34 ♗c1! (34 ♗d2 ♖g8 35 ♕h4 ♔e7 36 g4 ♗e8! 37 g5 fxg5 38 ♗xg5+ ♔d7 39 ♔h1 ♗f7 is unclear – Yusupov, Dvoretsky) 34...♖g8 35 ♕h3! ♔e7 36 g4 (threatening 37 g5 fxg5 38 f6+) 36...♖af8 37 ♖g2 with the unavoidable g4-g5 breakthrough (Bologan).

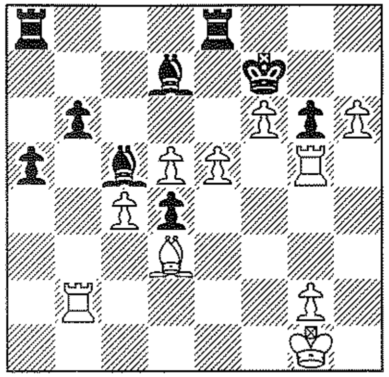
34 ♕xg5+ ♔f8 (not 34...♔h8? 35 ♕f6+ ♔g8 36 ♖f3)



35 ♕f6+??

White's entire preceding play demanded the 35 f6! breakthrough, and after 35...♕f7 (otherwise f6-f7) 36 ♕xe5 ♖e8! (36...♕g6 37 ♖xb6! ♕xh6 38 ♕e7+!! ♗xe7 39 fxe7+ ♔xe7 40 ♖xh6; 36...♗d7 37 ♖xb6! ♗xb6 38 ♕d6+ ♔g8 39 ♕xb6, or here 37...♖e8 38 ♖e6! ♗xe6 39 dxe6 ♖ac8 40 e7+ ♔g8 41 ♕g5+ ♔h8 42 e5 ♗xe7 43 ♕g7+! ♕xg7 44 hxg7+ ♔g8 45 c5! h5 46 ♗c4+ ♔h7 47 ♗f7! d3 48 ♖f5 and wins) 37 ♕g5 ♕g6 38 ♖f5! the pawn avalanche would have swept away everything in its path.

The computer supports this thesis with a series of colourful variations: 38...♗d7 (not 38...♖a7 39 e5 ♖xe5 40 ♖xe5 ♕xd3 41 f7!, or 38...♕xg5 39 ♖xg5 ♔f7 40 ♖g7+!) 39 ♕xg6 hxg6 40 ♖g5 ♔f7 (40...a4? 41 ♖xg6) 41 e5.

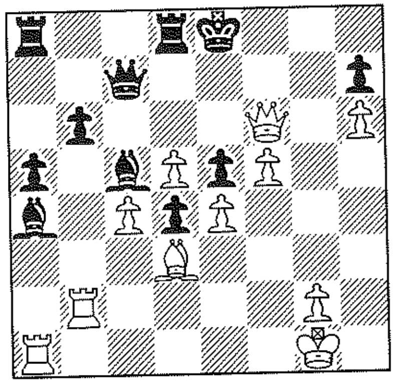


Analysis diagram

41...♗f5!? (an idea of grandmaster Vadim Zviagintsev; if 41...♖xe5 42 ♖xe5 ♔xf6 White wins by 43 ♖be2 a4 44 g4! ♗xg4 45 ♖e8 ♖a7 46 ♖g2! ♗f5 47 ♖e6+!) 42 ♗xf5 d3+!? (42...♖xe5 43 ♗xg6+ ♔xf6 44 ♖xe5 ♔xe5 45 ♖e2+! ♔f4 46 ♖e8!, or here 45...♔f6 46 ♖e6+ ♔g5 47 ♗d3 and wins) 43 ♔h2! (Dvoretsky; 43 ♔f1 ♖xe5 44 ♗xg6+ ♔xf6 45 ♖xe5 ♔xe5 46 ♗xd3 ♔d4 47 ♔e2 ♖e8+! 48 ♔d2 ♖g8! 49 h7 ♖xg2+ 50 ♔d1 ♖g1+ and ...♖h1 is unclear) 43...♖xe5 44 ♗xg6+ ♔xf6 45 ♖xe5 ♔xe5 46 ♗xd3 a4 47 h7 a3 48 ♖d2 ♔d4 49 ♗b1+ ♔xc4 50 d6 and wins.

35...♔e8 36 ♖a1

The point of White's plan. Now, in the event of the bishop retreating, the queen check will be fully justified, but... the bishop is not obliged to retreat!

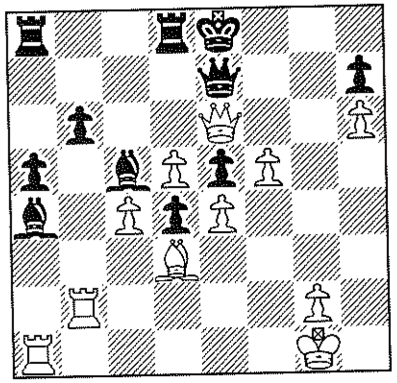


36...♕e7!!

This brilliant defensive move was made by Petrosian almost without thinking. White's attack peters out, since his rooks are stuck on the queenside.

37 ♕e6?!

Realising that the endgame after 37 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 38 ♖xa4 ♖d6 39 g3 ♖g8! and ...♖xh6 was too depressing (although not altogether hopeless!), I tried to confuse matters.



37...♖d6

'Petrosian is again equal to the occasion: after 37...♕xe6 38 fxe6 ♗d7 39 exd7+ ♖xd7 40 ♖f2 White would have managed to save the game,' I wrote immediately after the game. But now after 40...♖f7! I am not so sure: say, 41 ♖f5 ♖xf5 42 exf5 ♔f7 followed by ...a4-a3, ...♔f6 etc.

I should add that if 38...♗c6!?, then it is bad to play 39 dxc6? ♔e7 40 ♖f2 ♔xe6 41 ♖af1 ♖f8, but White is saved by 39 ♖f2! ♔e7 (39...♖a7 40 ♖f5! ♗a8 41 ♖af1) 40 ♖f7+ ♔d6 41 e7 ♖e8 42 ♖f6+ ♔xe7 43 ♖xc6.

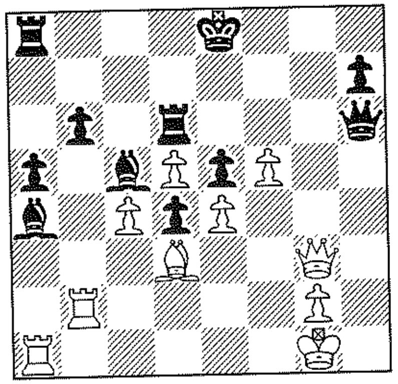
38 ♕g8+ (again ignoring 38 ♕xe7+)

38...♕f8 39 ♕g3

'After the alternative 39 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 40 ♖xa4 ♖xh6 41 g3 ♔g7 42 ♖h2 ♖xh2 43 ♔xh2 ♔f6 White's defence is very difficult.' (Petrosian)

39...♕xh6

In time-trouble Black avoids the anxious 39...♗d7!? 40 ♕xe5+ ♔d8 (40...♔f7?! 41 ♕g3! ♖xh6 42 e5 is inferior) 41 ♕g7 ♖xh6 42 ♕xf8+ ♗xf8 43 e5 ♗c5, which would have given him chances of converting his extra piece. Now, on the other hand, not a trace remains of White's attack.



40 ♖xa4??

At the most inappropriate moment! It was also hopeless to play 40 ♖e2(f2) ♗b3! 41 ♕xe5+ ♔f7 with the decisive inclusion of the rook at a8. However, 40 ♕g8+! ♕f8 (40...♔d7 41 ♕xa8 ♕e3+ 42 ♖f2 ♕xd3 43 f6 with equality) 41 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 42 ♖xa4 would still have allowed White to resist in an inferior endgame.

40...♕c1+ (I simply overlooked this 'long' move) **41 ♔f2** (41 ♔h2 ♖h6+) **41...♕xb2+**

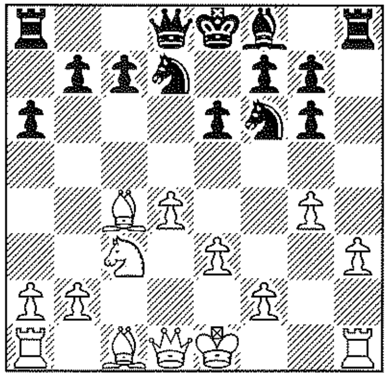
42 ♔f3 ♔f7 0-1

The time scramble ended with a cold shower for me!

Our duel in Tilburg followed a similar course. Prior to this game I had lost with White in a winning position against Spassky (*Game No.84*), but then had defeated Hübner in good style with Black. Naturally, I was now eager to retrieve my losses against the other ex-world champion. After creating a promising position, I sacrificed a pawn to gain several tempi and build up an attack on the king. But I failed to find a clear-cut continuation in the time scramble, and again ran into an amazing defence by Petrosian.

Game 46
G.Kasparov-T.Petrosian
Tilburg 1981, 7th round
Queen's Gambit Accepted D22

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 ♗g4 (4...e6 – *Game No.30*) **5 ♗xc4 e6 6 h3 ♗h5 7 ♘c3 a6 8 g4 ♗g6 9 ♘e5 ♘bd7 10 ♘xg6 hxg6**



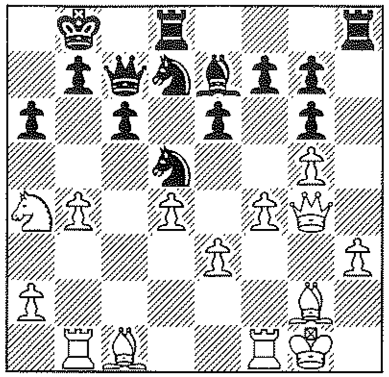
11 ♗f1!

A harmless alternative is 11 g5 ♘d5 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 ♗xd5 c6 and ...♕xg5 with equality. The variation chosen by my opponent came as something of a surprise – however, a pleasant one: White has a spatial advantage and chances of an attack. When I made the 'reverse' move with my bishop and stood up from the board, Spassky approvingly slapped me on the shoulder: a good manoeuvre!

11...c6 12 ♗g2 ♕c7 13 0-0 ♗e7 14 f4 ♘b6 15 g5 ♘fd7 (15...♘fd5?! 16 e4 is inferior) **16 ♕g4 0-0-0**

In search of at least some counterplay, Black must castle queenside: if 16...0-0?, then 17 h4! and h4-h5.

17 ♖b1 ♔b8 18 b4!? ♘d5 19 ♘a4



19...f5!

Again a surprise: when sacrificing the pawn, I had been hoping for 19...♘xb4? 20 ♗d2 ♘d5 21 e4 and White's attack develops without any particular interference – even after the best 21...f5 (Petrosian) 22 gxf6 ♘5xf6 23 ♕xe6 ♘c5 24 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 25 dxc5 ♖xd2 26 e5 ♘d5 27 ♕xg6.

20 ♕g3

20 gxf6 gxf6 21 ♕xe6 ♖de8! was unclear. I had to accept the appearance of an 'eternal' knight at d5.

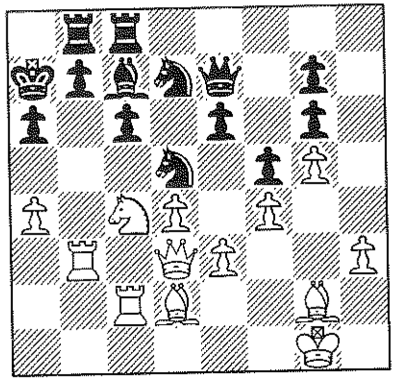
20...♘xb4 21 ♗d2 ♘d5 22 ♖fc1

White's strong pressure on the b- and c-files allows him to look to the future with optimism, and, on a board full of pieces, Black's extra pawn is not felt.

22...♔a7 23 ♕e1 ♗a3!? 24 ♖c2 ♕d6 25 ♖b3 ♕e7 26 ♕e2 ♖b8

In Petrosian's opinion, 26...♖a8!? was more accurate, with the same idea of ...♖hc8 and ...b7-b5.

27 ♕d3 ♗d6 28 ♘b2! ♖hc8 29 ♘c4 ♗c7 30 a4!



Here I was already anticipating placing my pawn on a5, then playing ♖cb2 and ♕b1, and... gaining convincing revenge for my vexing defeat in Moscow. And indeed, it is not clear what Black can do.

30...b5!?

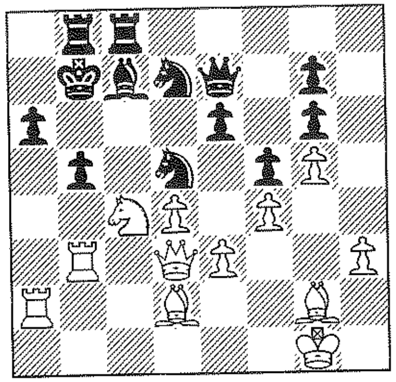
This move staggered me. It looks like a gesture of despair – otherwise White's threats snowball: 30...♘7b6 31 ♘a5 ♗d8 (31...♗d6 32 ♖cb2) 32 ♗f1! ♕d7! (not 32...♖a8? 33 ♘xb7! ♔xb7 34 a5, or 32...c5? 33 dxc5 ♖xc5 34 ♘c6+!) 33 ♖cb2 c5 34 dxc5 ♖xc5 35 ♘xb7! ♖xb7 36 a5 with an attack, although Black retains drawing chances after 36...♖b5 37 ♖xb5 (37 ♕d4 ♖xb3 38 ♖xb3 ♕c6!) 37...axb5 38 ♕d4 b4 39 axb6+ ♗xb6 40 ♖a2+ ♔b8 41 ♕e5+ ♖c7! 42 ♗g2 ♗c5 43 ♖a6 ♔c8!, since is 44 ♖xe6? is met by 44...♘e7!

31 axb5 cxb5 32 ♖a2!

A strong rejoinder. It appears that the collapse of Black's defences is now imminent. I remember that I was very proud of my position and thought that the game was already over.

32...♔b7!?

But this move staggered me even more: can such play really go unpunished?! Surely the opponent was obliged to go in for the variation 32...♗d6 (32...bxc4? 33 ♖xa6+!; 32...♗xf4? 33 ♘a3!) 33 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 34 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 35 ♕xb5 with an obvious advantage to White? Sensing that the win was somewhere near, I started growing nervous.



33 ♗b4?

Strangely enough, this natural move, building up the pressure, is a serious mistake. I underestimated Black's defensive potential! 33 ♕b1 was interesting, but this too would not have solved the problems facing White. He should *not be circumventing, but attacking Black's fortifications* – at a6, b5 and d5. This aim is served by the knight manoeuvre c4-a3-c2-b4.

I discovered the grandiose move 33 ♘a3! immediately after the game. In my book *The Test of Time* (1984) I gave 33...♗b6 34 ♘c2! ♖a8 35 ♘b4 ♕d6 36 e4(?) fxe4 37 ♕xe4 as the main variation, overlooking the spectacular refutation, later pointed out by Timman: 36...♘c5!! 37 dxc5 ♕xc5+ 38 ♔h2 ♕g1+ 39 ♔g3 ♕f2+ (39...♖h8? 40 ♗e3!) 40 ♔h2 ♕g1+ with perpetual check.

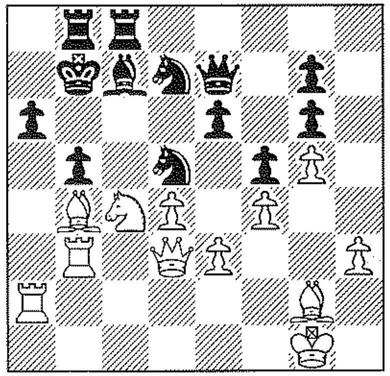
Even so, with the help of the computer I was able to find the accurate 36 ♖b1! ♘b8 (36...♖c4? 37 ♕a3!) 37 ♕b3 ♖c4 (37...♖d8 38 ♖c1) 38 ♖c1 ♖xc1 39 ♗xc1 with an overwhelming advantage for White.

My computer friend also brought some 'joy' in another direction. In my book I stated that after 33 ♘a3! the reply 33...♘b6 would lose to 34 ♘xb5 axb5 35 ♕xb5 ♖d8 (35...♖a8?? 36 ♕xd5+ and mate) 36 ♗b4! ♕e8 (36...♕f7 37 ♗c5) 37 ♕a6+ ♔c6 38 ♗c5 ♔d7 (38...♖a8 39 ♖xb6+) 39 ♗f1! However, it transpired that 35...♖h8! is stronger – here White has to display exceptional ingenuity in his attack:

1) 36 ♗xd5+ (36 ♖c3?! ♔c8!) 36...exd5 37 ♖c3 ♔c8 38 ♖a7 ♘c4 39 ♕xd5 ♘xd2 40 ♖cxc7+ ♕xc7 41 ♖xc7+ ♔xc7 42 ♕a5+ ♔d6 43 ♕xd2 ♖xh3 44 ♕c1 ♖bh8 45 ♕c5+ and only a special analysis can establish whether the queen and pawn will overcome the resistance of the two rooks;

2) 36 ♗b4! ♕e8 37 ♕a6+ ♔c6 38 ♗f1! (but not 38 ♗c5 ♔d7 39 ♖ab2 ♕c8! 40 ♕b5+ ♔d8) 38...♘xb4 39 ♖xb4 ♕d8 (it also bad to play 39...♕e7 40 ♗b5+ ♔d5 41 ♕a3! ♖hc8 42 ♗f1, or 39...♕c8 40 ♕b5+ ♔d6 41 ♕e5+ ♔e7 42 ♕xg7+ ♔d6 43 ♕e5+ ♔e7 44 ♖a7) 40 ♕b5+ ♔d6 41 ♕e5+ ♔e7 42 ♕xg7+ ♔d6 43 ♖c2 ♘d5 44 ♗b5 ♖xb5 45 ♖xb5 and wins.

Thus, to find the narrow path leading to a win for White, many years and lots of megahertz of computer power were required. But at the board, not suspecting any latent dangers, I continued simply building up the pressure. Such a general approach does not always prove correct, as I came to realise within literally a couple of moves.



33...♕e8!

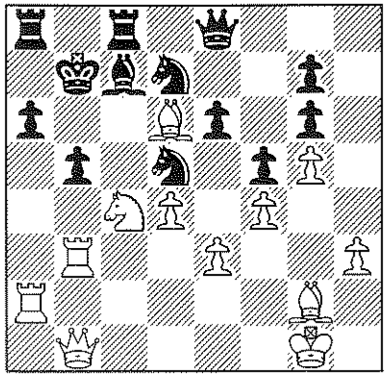
From here the queen indirectly defends the b5-pawn. 33...♕d8? was much weaker in view of 34 e4! fxe4 35 ♕xe4 with irresistible threats: 35...♕e8 36 ♕xd5+! exd5 37 ♗xd5+ ♔a7 38 ♖xa6+! ♔xa6 39 ♖a3+ ♗a5 40 ♖xa5 mate, or 35...bxc4 36 ♕xe6 ♘7b6 37 ♖b1 ♕d7 38 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 39 ♗xd5+ ♔a7 40 ♖ba1 ♖b6 41 ♗c5 and wins.

34 ♗d6

34 ♗a5 ♕e7 was of no use, but Petrosian's recommendation 34 ♘d6+!? ♗xd6 35 ♗xd6 ♖a8 36 e4 was better, for example: 36...♖c1+ 37 ♔h2 fxe4 38 ♗xe4 ♖c6 39 ♗a3 ♘7b6 40 ♖f2 and ♗xg6 with the initiative.

34...♖a8! 35 ♕b1?

White again plays on general grounds, hoping that an opportunity for him to land some combinative blow will present itself. After the 'concrete' 35 e4 fxe4 36 ♕xe4 ♕f7 Black could have felt quite calm with his powerful knight at d5. But 35 ♖b1! ♗b6! (35...♔c6 36 ♗a3!, and if 36...♘b6, then 37 ♘a5+ ♔d7 38 ♖xb5!) 36 ♘e5 would still have retained adequate compensation for the pawn.



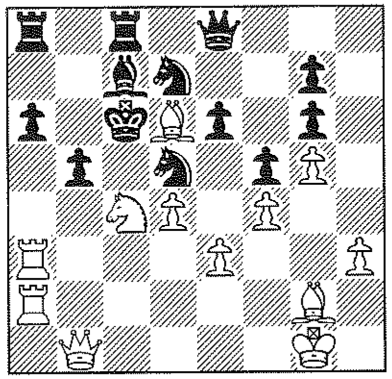
35...♔c6!!

A fantastic defence! This move, which Petrosian made instantly, threw me into complete confusion: how is it possible to move the king forward with a board full of pieces?! After Steinitz, who had done such a thing?! The psychological effect of the 30...b5!? thrust and the king march ...♔a7-b7-c6 was so strong, that I was unable to gather my thoughts and I quickly lost.

36 ♖ba3?

It was essential to play 36 ♗xc7 bxc4 (36...♔xc7 37 ♘b2 ♔d8 38 ♕a1! and ♘d3 with compensation for the pawn) 37 ♖b7! (the over-optimistic 37 ♗a5?! cxb3 38 ♕xb3 ♖ab8

39 ♖c2+ is refuted by 39...♘c5! 40 ♖xc5+ ♔d7) 37...♖xc7 38 ♖xa6+ ♖xa6 39 ♕b5+ ♔d6 40 ♕xa6+ ♔e7 41 ♗xd5 ♖xb7 42 ♗xb7 (not 42 ♕xe6+? ♔d8 43 ♕xe8+ ♔xe8 44 ♗xb7 c3) 42...♕b8! with a drawn endgame.



36...bxc4 37 ♖xa6+ ♖xa6 38 ♖xa6+ ♗b6 39 ♗c5 (39 ♕b4 ♔b7 40 ♖a2 c3!) **39...♕d8! 40 ♕a1** (40 ♕b4 ♔b7!) **40...♘xc5 41 dxc5 ♔xc5 42 ♖a4 0-1**

In post-game analysis it was noticeable how much more deeply my opponent had evaluated the resulting positions.

My games with the 9th world champion broadened my understanding of chess. Had it not been for these two defeats, I would possibly not have reached the top in chess. I saw how many latent defensive possibilities are often hidden in cramped positions! And, of course, I was filled with boundless respect for Petrosian's talent.

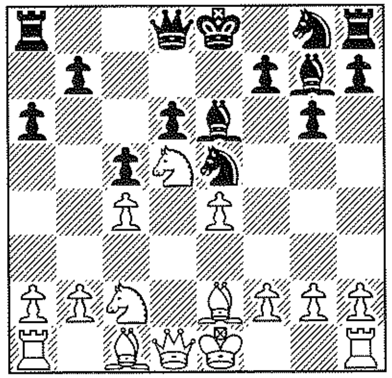
No less worthy of recognition are his many years of journalistic and teaching activity. He splendidly commented on Botvinnik's matches with Smyslov and Tal, and he was the author of some highly interesting and controversial articles. In the mid-1960s he edited the newspaper *Shakhmatnaya Moskva* and in 1968, using his connections in the higher echelons of power, he created and for almost 10 years was in charge of the popular all-union weekly *64*. In 1977 he happily accepted the invitation of Alexander Nikitin to organise a school for young Spartak players; moreover, he was never a mere figurehead, he did not miss a single session and, while his health permitted, he worked twice a year with the juniors. Among those who studied in this school, named after Petrosian, were the future grandmasters Gelfand, Novikov, Matveeva and Dokhoian and dozens of future masters.

Finale

As you will remember, in his youth Tigran Vartanovich was quite prepared to sacrifice. Now look at a game, played not long before his death, in the 50th USSR Championship, which was to be his last. Over the course of 30 years his creative credo had hardly changed: one sees the same non-routine approach to the solving of opening and middlegame problems. And although overall this tournament was by no means the best one in Petrosian's career, the game with his old friend and opponent, Lev Polugayevsky, was conducted as in his former years.

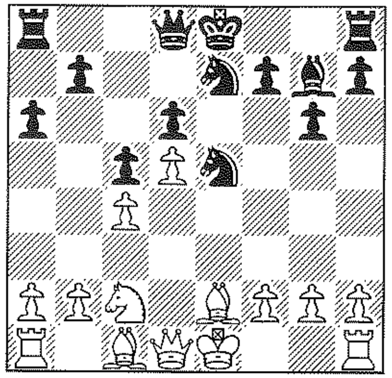
Game 47
L.Polugayevsky-T.Petrosian
50th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1983
Modern Defence A42

1 ♘f3 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c4 d6 4 ♘c3 e5 5 e4 ♘c6 6 dxe5 ♘xe5 7 ♘d4 a6 8 ♗e2 c5 9 ♘c2 ♗e6 10 ♘d5



The opening has been played in a very original, creative manner, but we will not dwell on it. I think that objectively White has the advantage, only he should have played 10 ♘e3!, not hurrying to occupy the d5-square immediately.

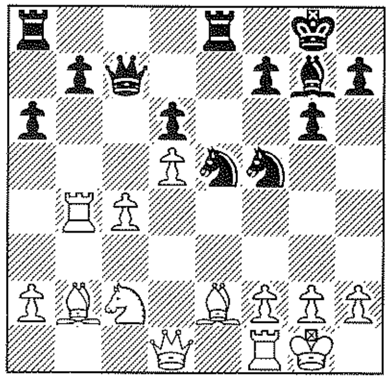
10...♗xd5 11 exd5 ♘e7



12 0-0

Polugayevsky no doubt thought that such a structure with the two bishops guaranteed him an advantage. He often played (and won!) similar King's Indian positions.

12...0-0 13 ♖b1 ♘f5 14 b4 cxb4 15 ♖xb4 ♕c7 16 ♗b2 ♖fe8

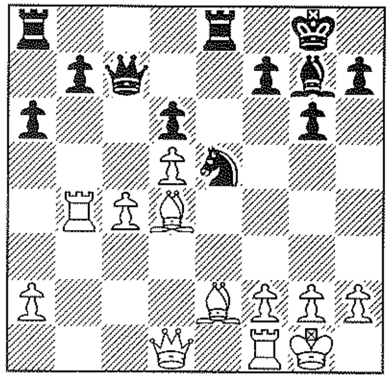


White has played b2-b4, exploiting the early weakening 7...a6. But this has turned out to be a double-edged decision, since a weakness has emerged not only at b7, but also at c4. In addition, Black has acquired the c5-square. In such positions, with Petrosian you had to be very watchful: he would always find opportunities to create strong points and exploit them with maximum effect.

17 ♘d4 ♘xd4

It is logical that White should decide to exchange his c2-knight for the one at f5. Moreover, here there was an interesting trap: 17...♕c5?! 18 a3! a5 and if 19 ♖b5? Black could have sacrificed his queen – 19...♘xc4 20 ♖xc5 ♘xb2 21 ♕d2 (21 ♘xf5? ♘xd1 22 ♘xd6 ♖xe2 23 ♖xd1 ♗f8) 21...♘xd4 22 ♖xa5 ♘xe2+ 23 ♔h1 ♖ac8, emerging from the complications with the advantage. However, White himself could have unexpectedly gone in for a temporary exchange sacrifice: 19 ♘xf5! axb4 20 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♗d4 ♕c7 22 f4, winning a piece. The passed a-pawn is easily blockaded from a1, while the black king is extremely weakened. I am sure that Petrosian did not even consider such continuations. He saw a clear-cut plan for Black: the exchange on d4 and ...♘d7-c5.

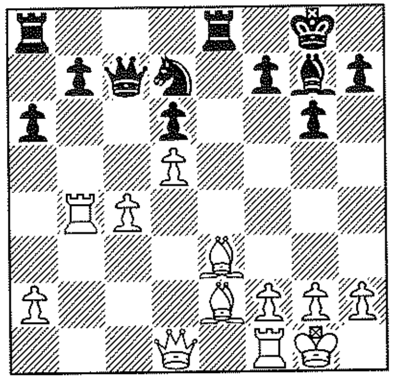
18 ♗xd4



18...♘d7! 19 ♗e3

It is clear that White, to maintain the pressure, will avoid the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

In the event of the 'normal' 19...♘c5 White could have played 20 ♕d2 or 20 ♕c2, or even captured on c5. But at this instant Petrosian sharply changes the character of the play with his patent exchange sacrifice! Moreover, here this sacrifice is even less forced, than in those games where Black was indeed threatened with serious problems (*Game Nos.2 and 3*), and there were no particular grounds for rejecting 19...♘c5. This emphasises the purity of Petrosian's idea.

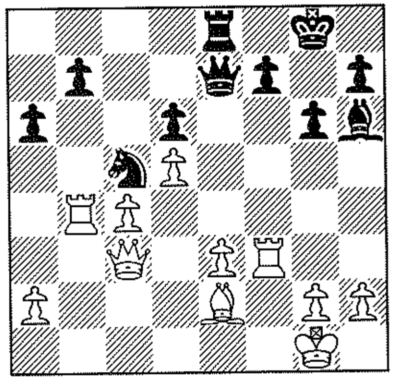


19...♖xe3!? 20 fxe3 ♘c5

Black has achieved what he wanted: an 'eternal' knight at c5, complete domination of the dark squares and a doomed pawn at e3 (Polugayevsky realised that it could not be defended literally three moves later).

21 ♕c2 ♖e8 22 ♖f3 ♗h6 23 ♕c3 ♕e7

Thus White cannot save his e-pawn.



After the correct 24 ♔h1 ♗xe3 25 ♖b1 ♗g5 26 ♗d3 f5 Black has full compensation for the exchange. It would perhaps be more interesting playing Black, who nevertheless has some initiative. Moreover, it is not clear how White can make any real progress. But here Polugayevsky made an atypical blunder.

24 ♖b6?? (losing the rook outright) **24...♘a4 0-1**

It seems to me that, even without this blunder, White faced a difficult defence and that Black would have been able to exploit the qualitative superiority of his pieces, which neutralises his nominal material deficit.

In the last few months of his life Petrosian was seriously ill and became terribly emaciated (as did his friend Tal a few years later). Nevertheless, in the spring of 1984 he agreed to help me prepare for my world championship match with Karpov, and we even met on a couple of occasions.

I remember a reception in the Spartak Sports Society chess club in celebration of my win in the final Candidates match over Smyslov. Petrosian and Tal were among the honoured guests. When someone in the audience asked me: 'What do you think of Fischer?,' I replied: 'This question would be better answered by his opponents, the living legends who are present here!' On hearing these words, the dozing Tal (who was slightly sedated) raised his head and muttered: 'Barely living legends...' Petrosian threw him an angry glance, but then registered his acceptance, gave in and began to laugh...

In June he reached the age of 55. He could still be seen in the USSR Central Chess Club on Gogol Boulevard, and dreamed of playing in the second 'Match of the Century' (London 1984), preparing to travel with the team, refusing to believe that his illness was incurable. But, alas, his days were numbered. And two months later, on 13th August, Tigran Vartanovich passed away.

In conclusion, as has now become customary, I give a selection of interesting opinions by the world champions.

Euwe: 'If we look in chess history for a "double" of Petrosian, we arrive at Capablanca. Petrosian is not a tiger that pounces on its prey, but rather a python, that smothers its victim, or a crocodile, waiting for hours for a convenient moment to land a decisive blow. Petrosian is an outstanding strategist. If he should begin to combine a little, he will be impossible to play against.'

Botvinnik: 'Among all our grandmasters Petrosian possesses the most distinctive and original talent: he places his pieces so astutely, that all attacks on them prove very difficult. This is a subtle and rare style, to which it is hard to adapt.'

Smyslov: 'Petrosian masterfully created positions that demanded of his opponents an ability to solve independent problems at the board. His opening preparation combined a knowledge of theory and a knowledge of human psychology. Players who cannot take a single step without *Chess Informator* were ironically called by him "children of *Informator*".'

Tal: 'Petrosian, of course, was a phenomenal chess talent; he played so deeply and interestingly, that he sometimes found ideas for his opponents that never even entered their heads. Petrosian had Capablanca's technique and Schlechter's sense of danger.'

Petrosian: 'A strong player knows all the rules and laws of the game. A talented player knows everything that a strong player knows, but he also sees exceptions to the rules. But major chess talents (we call them geniuses) gradually transform these exceptions into new rules. And so on ad infinitum, since chess is inexhaustible.'

Spassky: 'Petrosian was a distinctive, highly intelligent man, with an excellent sense of humour. And a player with an amazingly subtle feeling. Perhaps for a professional this is in general the greatest talent. Of course, his was a colossal tactical talent. In general he was a strategist, but a tactician by nature.'

Fischer: 'Petrosian has the ability to see and eliminate danger 20 moves before it arises! I was staggered by Petrosian's ability, after achieving an excellent position, all the time to find manoeuvres that strengthened it.'

Karpov: 'Petrosian was able to make combinations no worse than Tal, but he restrained his talent and played purely positionally.'

CHAPTER TWO

Boris the Tenth

While working on this chapter I unexpectedly discovered that the play of Boris Vasilievich Spassky (born 30 January 1937), in contrast to that of his immediate predecessors (Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal and Petrosian), does not lend itself to a distinct division into any clearly expressed components, making it unique and unrepeatable. With Spassky everything is somehow diffuse and misty – and this, evidently, confirms his image of a universal player. It is generally considered that the universal chess style, involving an ability to play the most varied types of positions, stems from Spassky.

However, in my view, this general conviction about Spassky's universality ignores the fact that from childhood he clearly had a leaning towards sharp, attacking play, and possessed a splendid feel for the initiative. These habits were, I think, cultivated in him by his first trainer Zak, and then developed and consolidated by Tolush. And a liking for pretty attacks can be traced throughout Spassky's chess career.

Therefore it is nevertheless possible to pick out the main, dominating features of the 10th world champion's play, which were mastered back in his youth, as though at the genetic level. Spassky liked in particular a strong, mobile centre and free development, and he was splendid at conducting a direct attack on the king. Furthermore, he gradually also learned to manoeuvre subtly, defend inferior positions, and play the endgame with good technique. And he did everything equally well, even with a kind of exaggerated indifference: well, if it's an attack – it's an attack, if it's an endgame – it's an endgame.

But at the slightest opportunity Spassky would nevertheless demonstrate his innate ability to find his way in complex positions, abounding in tactics and lacking customary guides. So that in his chess roots Spassky is in fact much closer to Chigorin, Alekhine and Tal, than to Botvinnik, Smyslov or Petrosian. It is probably this that explains why in his best years neither Tal nor Korchnoi could essentially play against him. Since their play, especially that of Tal, could be read by Spassky like an open book.

'I am sure that chess has a splendid future, because it is an eternal struggle,' thinks Boris Vasilievich. 'The computer age has arrived, and it influences everything: analysis, preparation, information. Now a different talent is required – the ability to synthesise ideas. Here for the moment man is still in front.'

Riga Catastrophe

Spassky's career is not altogether typical of a world champion – it abounds in both vivid climbs and incredible falls. His start was perhaps one of the most brilliant. At the age of ten Boris began studying with the well-known trainer Vladimir Zak, at 15 he made his mark in the adult championship of Leningrad (1. Taimanov, 2. Spassky, 3. Levenfish, 4. Korchnoi...), and at 16 he excelled in a strong international tournament in Bucharest (1953), where he gained a memorable win over Smyslov in the first round and ultimately became an international master.

'It is amusing, but I was helped by the Soviet authorities,' remembers Spassky. 'The tournament began with the Soviet players taking points off each other, and as a result the Hungarian László Szabó took the lead. And here a telegram arrived from Moscow: 'Stop this scandal, start making draws among yourselves!' Of course, it was good that I had already gained a point against Smyslov, but I think that it would not have been easy for me, given my youth and inexperience, to make draws with Boleslavsky and Petrosian. But as it was, we all submitted to the order from the Kremlin.'

At the age of 18 Boris made a successful debut in the 22nd USSR Championship (1955), a world championship Zonal event. In finishing only half a point behind the winners, Geller and Smyslov, he shared 3rd-6th places with Botvinnik, Petrosian and Ilivitsky and qualified for the Interzonal tournament. And from this he went straight to the Candidates tournament, after succeeding in becoming world junior champion along the way.

In the Amsterdam Candidates tournament (1956) he was not really a serious contender for first place, but he nevertheless shared 3rd-7th places, finishing only half a point behind Keres and two behind the winner – Smyslov. Vasily Vasilievich was of course, beyond comparison: he was then effectively the strongest player in the world (he won two successive Candidates cycles and played three matches with Botvinnik). And in this tournament Smyslov lost only one game – again to Spassky! This was also, incidentally, a highly characteristic game: after ending up in a strategically hopeless position as Black, the young Spassky demonstrated amazing resourcefulness and managed to confuse his formidable opponent to such an extent that the latter was unable to gain even a draw.

It appeared that later too Spassky's career would be equally successful. In the 23rd USSR Championship (1956) he shared first place with Taimanov and Averbakh, finishing a point ahead of a new rising star, the 19-year-old Riga master Mikhail Tal (and, incidentally, crushing him in their individual meeting). However, in the next USSR Championship (1957) the roles were reversed: Tal became champion for the first time, while Spassky finished 'the same' point behind. Thus a sharp rivalry developed between the two leaders of the young generation.

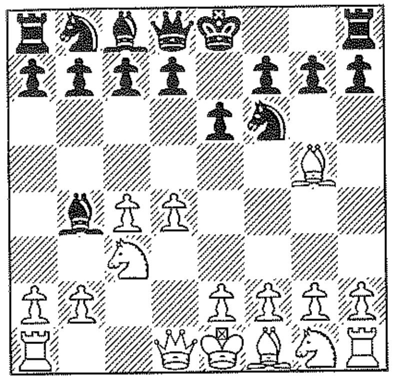
The following unusual game is typical of the style and creative mood of the Boris of that time.

Game 48
B.Spassky-R.Kholmov
24th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1957, 6th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E31

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5

This currently half-forgotten opening variation was inherited by Spassky from his first trainer, Zak. Boris gained several notable wins with it, beginning with the aforementioned one over Smyslov (1953). However, this variation, which is called the Leningrad, has never become popular on account of the obvious strategic defects that arise in White's position.

In general White's results are not very favourable, with the exception of... Spassky's games: +17-1=11(!).



4...h6

A slightly different variation goes 4...c5 5 d5 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 e5 7 ♘f3 (7 d6!? Spassky) 7...d6 8 ♘d2 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘bd7 10 e3 ♘f8 11 ♗d3 ♘g6 12 ♗g3 0-0 (the immediate 12...♘e7! and ...♘f5 is more accurate, with equality) 13 0-0 ♘e7 14 f4! with a lively battle (Spassky-Larsen, 1st round, 'Match of the Century', Belgrade 1970).

5 ♗h4 c5 6 d5 ♗xc3+

Smyslov defended against Spassky with 6...exd5 7 cxd5 d6 8 e3 ♘bd7, Keres was unsuccessful twice with 6...d6 7 e3 e5 8 ♘e2 ♘bd7, whereas Tal gained the only success with the sharp 6...b5!? (*Volume 2, Game No.141*).

7 bxc3 e5

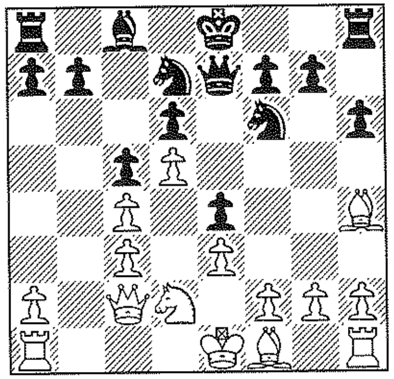
It was this set-up that sharply diminished the popularity of the Leningrad Variation. True, one possibility with this move order is the sharp line 8 d6!? ♘c6 (Spassky-Timman, Tallinn 1973), and, in order to exclude this, they switched to 7...d6! 8 e3 e5 or 8...♕e7!? 9 ♗d3 ♘bd7 10 ♘e2 (10 ♘f3 e5 Timman-Romanishin, Tilburg 1985) 10...♘e5! 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 0-0 ♕h4! 13 ♘f4 ♘xd3 14 ♕xd3 e5 with a comfortable game (Miles-Karpov, Tilburg 1986).

8 ♕c2

The alternative is 8 e3 d6, when it is bad to play 9 ♗d3?! e4! 10 ♗c2 (10 ♗xe4? g5) 10...g5 11 ♗g3 ♕e7 12 h4 ♖g8 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 ♘e2 ♘bd7 15 ♕b1 ♔d8! 16 a4 a5 17 ♖a2 ♔c7 18 ♖h6 ♖a6 19 ♕b5 ♔b8 20 ♖b2 ♔a7 21 ♕b3 ♘g4 22 ♖h1 f5 23 ♔d1 ♖b6... 0-1 (Williams-Karpov, Nice Olympiad 1974). And after 9 ♘f3, apart from 9...♘bd7, Black can play both 9...♕e7 10 ♘d2 g5 11 ♗g3 ♗f5 12 h4 ♖g8 (Spassky-Tisdall, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988), and 9...♗f5 10 ♘d2 g5 11 ♗g3 ♘bd7 12 f3 ♗g6 13 e4 ♕e7 (Spassky-Short, Zurich rapidplay 2001). In this, the last published game by Boris Vasilievich using his favourite variation, White again won!

8...d6 9 e3 ♕e7 10 ♘f3 ♘bd7 (in Spassky's later games 10...g5 11 ♗g3 e4 12 ♘d2 ♗f5 13 ♖b1 occurred) **11 ♘d2 e4!**

A reasonable alternative is 11...g5 (only not 11...0-0?! 12 ♗d3!) 12 ♗g3 e4!, for example: 13 h4 ♖g8 14 ♖b1 ♔d8 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 ♖b2 ♘f8 17 ♕b1 ♘g6 18 a4 ♖e8 19 ♘b3 ♕c7 20 ♗e2 ♖b8 21 ♔d2 ½-½ (Spassky-Sax, Solingen 1989).



Black's solid bulwarks in the centre deprive the position of dynamism, which the white bishops so need, and restrict any possible activity by White to diversions on the h- and b-files. Nowadays the soundness of Black's set-up is known even to young players.

12 0-0-0!?

A surprise! Kholmov had expected 12 ♗e2 0-0 13 0-0 and was intending to play 13...♖e8 14 ♖ae1 g5 15 ♗g3 ♘f8 16 f3 exf3 17 ♗xf3 ♘g6. But the centre is so blocked that both kings feel relatively safe on any part of the board, and their (often leisurely) movements are largely dictated by the need to connect the rooks. Thus after 12 ♗e2 it is also perfectly good to play 12...g5 13 ♗g3 ♘f8 14 h4 ♖g8 15 ♖b1 ♔d8!? 16 h5 ♘8d7 17 ♖b2 ♘e5 18 ♘xe4 ♗f5 with equality (Rubinetti-Polugayevsky, Mar del Plata 1971).

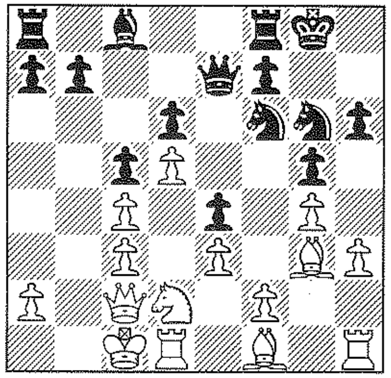
12...0-0!?

Only after this natural reply does the battle unexpectedly flare up. It would all have been quiet after 12...g5 13 ♗g3 ♘f8, for example: 14 h4 ♖g8 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 ♔b2 ♗f5 17 ♖b1 0-0-0 with level chances (Medina-Veingold, Ceuta 1993).

13 g4! g5!

Half a century ago such a move, away from the king, would have been made only by the 'chosen' few, but in fact it is positionally quite sound: when you have a strong centre, you don't have to fear flank operations by the opponent.

14 ♗g3 ♘e5! 15 h3 (of course, not 15 ♘xe4? ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♗xg4!) **15...♘g6**



By exploiting the fact that his central pawn was indirectly defended, Black has not only completed a useful regrouping, but also forced his opponent to make a 'superfluous' pawn move.

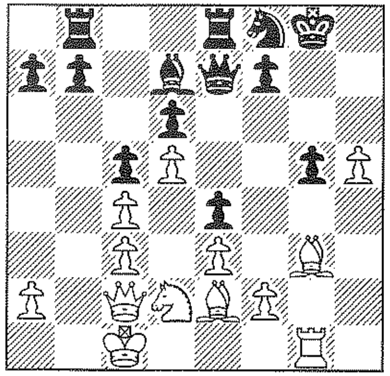
16 ♗e2 ♖e8 17 ♖dg1 ♗d7 18 h4 ♖ab8?!

In Kholmov's opinion, 18...a6! was better, but not 18...♗xg4? 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 21 ♗xd6!

19 hxg5 hxg5

Both sides complete their final battle preparations, but Spassky is the first to begin, and with a sudden combinative blow, the consequences of which are for the moment absolutely unclear.

20 ♖h5! (White is not tempted by the routine 20 ♖h6 a6!? 21 ♖gh1 b5) **20...♘xh5 21 gxh5 ♘f8**



For what has White given up the exchange? The answer is provided by a new, altogether unexpected sacrifice, taking the game into the world of irrational material balances.

22 ♘xe4!!

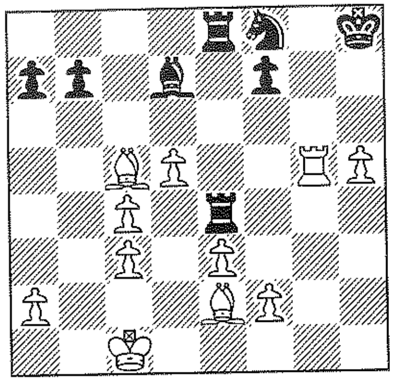
'After lengthy thought Spassky finds a clever possibility. The natural 22 ♗h4 or 22 ♗f4 would not have achieved anything on account of 22...f6.' (Kholmov)

22...♕xe4 23 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♗xd6 ♖be8

'Hardly any stronger was 24...♖c8 25 ♖xg5+ ♔h8 26 ♗e5+ ♖xe5 27 ♖xe5 ♖e8 28 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 29 e4 ♘d7 30 f4 f6, when the knight has to guard the e5-square. Had the rook been at a8, 24...f6 would have been possible. Of course, when he played 18...♖ab8 Black could not have anticipated such a cascade of sacrifices.' (Kholmov)

25 ♖xg5+ ♔h8 26 ♗xc5

In just six moves the position has altered beyond recognition, without, however, changing from the evaluation 'unclear'. But the colourful spectacle does not end at this.



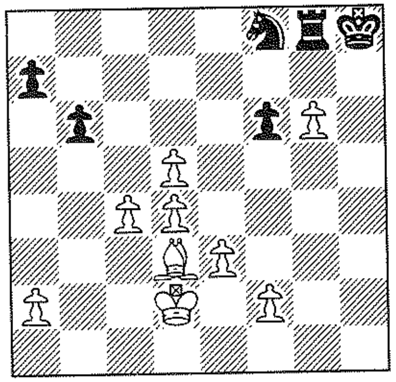
26...f6 27 ♖g3 b6 28 ♗d4 ♘h7 29 ♔d2 ♖g8 30 ♖g6!

With four pawns for a rook, White is even agreeable to an endgame!

30...♗e8 31 ♗d3!?

This new sacrifice is merely the signal for further exchanges, made in a highly original manner. According to Kholmov, after 31 ♗xf6+ (31 ♖xf6? ♖xd4+!) 31...♘xf6 32 ♖xf6 ♔g7 Black could have gradually activated his pieces, while the computer meticulously studies the restricting 31 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 32 f4!?

31...♗xg6 32 hxg6 ♖xd4 33 cxd4 ♘f8



The strict materialist Fritz evaluates this original 'single rook' endgame in favour of White, but in situations with such an unusual balance of forces the computer cannot be trusted. In fact, over the last 13 moves the adversaries have performed a scene, where rivers of blood have been shed, but where the most logical outcome has all the time remained a draw.

34 c5 bxc5 35 dxc5 ♘d7!

This reverse movement of the knight enables the balance to be maintained, whereas the greedy 35...♘xg6? would have been punished by 36 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 37 c6 ♖g8 38 c7! ♔g7 39 d6 ♔f7 40 d7 etc.

36 c6 ♘b6 37 e4!?

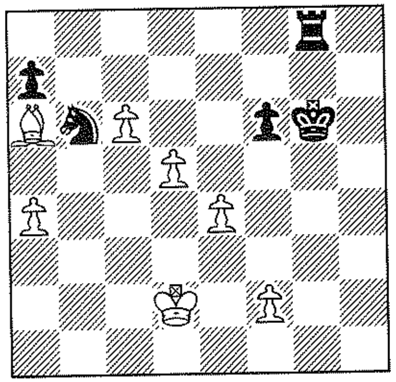
Sharpening the play in time-trouble. The sound 37 d6 would have secured a draw: 37...♖d8 38 d7 ♘xd7 (38...♘a8? 39 ♔c3 and wins) 39 cxd7 ♖xd7 40 f4 f5 41 ♔e2 ♖d5 42 ♗c4 ♖d6 43 ♗f7 ♔g7.

37...♔g7 38 ♗a6

Accuracy is also demanded of White – to avoid a blockade on the dark squares, for example: 38 ♗b5?! ♔xg6 39 d6 ♖d8 (or 39...♔f7, and the threat of ...♔e6! forces the hopeless 40 c7 ♖c8 41 d7 ♘xd7 42 ♗xd7 ♖xc7) 40 d7 ♘a8! 41 ♗c4 (41 ♔e3 ♔f7! 42 ♔d4 ♘c7 43 a4 ♔e7 44 ♔c5 ♘e6+ 45 ♔d5 ♖g8 46 ♔c4 ♔d6 and wins) 41...♔g7 followed by ...♔f8-e7 and ...♖h8.

The immediate 38 a4!? is also interesting, with the idea of 38...♘xa4? 39 d6 and 40 c7, exploiting the nuance that ...♔xg6? is bad on account of e4-e5+! However, after 38...a5 39 ♗b5 ♔xg6 40 ♔d3 ♔f7 the black rook should be able to cope with the pawn avalanche.

38...♔xg6 39 a4



39...♔f7

A simple draw would have resulted from 39...♘xa4 40 c7 ♘c5 41 c8♕ ♖xc8 42 ♗xc8 ♘xe4+ 43 ♔e3 ♘d6 44 ♗e6. A last problem could have been posed by 39...♘a8! 40 ♔c3 ♖d8 41 ♗c4 ♘c7 42 ♔d4 ♔g5! (not 42...♘e8? 43 f4!) 43 ♔c5 ♘e8, but the unexpected manoeuvre 44 ♗e2! ♔f4 (44...a5 45 ♗d1) 45 ♗h5! would have maintained the balance: 45...♘c7 46 d6 ♘a6+ 47 ♔d5 ♘b4+ 48 ♔c5 ♘d3+ 49 ♔d5 ♘b4+.

40 a5 ♘a8! (after 40...♘c8? 41 f4 White would have been threatening both e4-e5, and ♗xc8) **41 ♗c4 ♖d8 ½-½**

This last move was sealed. A brief analysis of the variation 42 f4 ♘c7 showed that after 43 d6+ ♔g6 44 e5 fxe5 45 fxe5 ♔f5 46 ♔c3 ♔xe5 47 dxc7 ♖c8 48 ♗a6 ♖xc7 49 ♗b7 Black cannot drive back the white king (Kholmov), while after 43 ♔e3 ♔e7 44 ♔d4 ♘e6+ 45 ♔e3 ♘c7 neither side can avoid the repetition of moves. Therefore – a draw. A beautiful flight of fantasy by Spassky!

And then came the next, 25th USSR Championship in Riga (1958), a Zonal tournament for the World Championship. Four qualifying places for the Interzonal tournament were at stake. But for Spassky, who was already dreaming of reaching dizzy heights, this was not enough: he decided to show who was who. Six rounds before the finish he was leading with the excellent score 9 out of 12, a point ahead of Petrosian and two ahead of Tal! He had gained splendid wins over Bronstein, Furman, and Krogius, and his game with Polugayevsky would later be judged the most brilliant in the tournament.

Game 49

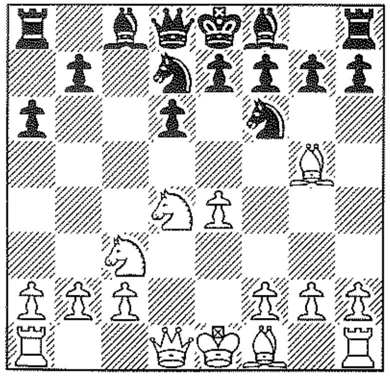
B.Spassky-L.Polugayevsky

25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958

Sicilian Defence B94

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7

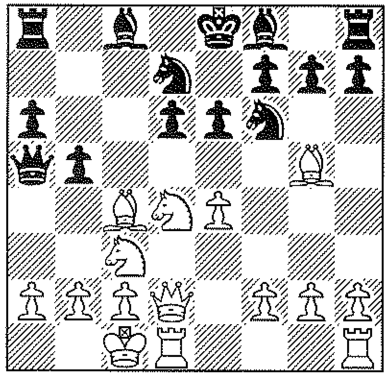
A fashionable set-up at the time. Its drawbacks are the neglect of the knight at d4 and the constant danger of invasions by White at d5 or e6. In 1958 the extremely risky 'Polugayevsky Variation' was not yet ripe for testing at such a serious level.



7 ♗c4 ♕a5 8 ♕d2 e6

In the famous 19th game of the Spassky-Petrosian match (Moscow 1969) White won with a direct attack on the king after 8...h6?! 9 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 10 0-0-0 e6 11 ♖he1 ♗e7 12 f4 0-0 13 ♗b3 ♖e8 14 ♔b1 ♗f8 15 g4!, thereby making a decisive step towards the world chess crown. The game concluded 15...♘xg4 16 ♕g2 ♘f6 17 ♖g1 ♗d7 18 f5 ♔h8 19 ♖df1 ♕d8 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 e5 dxe5 22 ♘e4 ♘h5 23 ♕g6 exd4 24 ♘g5 1-0 as 24...hxg5 25 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 26 ♕f7+ ♔h7 27 ♖f3 wins.

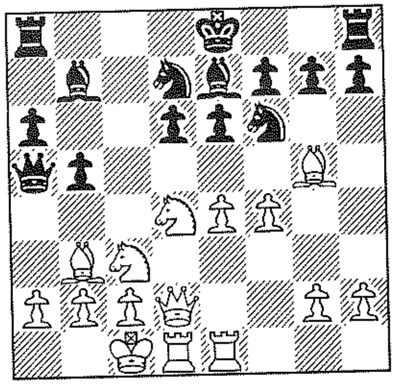
9 0-0-0 b5



10 ♗b3

After 10 ♗d5 Spassky considered a strong reply to be 10...b4! 11 ♗xa8 bxc3 with good counterplay, and this evaluation is confirmed by analysis.

10...♗b7 11 ♖he1 ♗e7 (activity before the completion of development – 11...b4? – is punished by the standard 12 ♘d5!, but 11...0-0-0!? is possible, Sherwin-Reshevsky, New York 1959; Gulko-Petrosian, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976) **12 f4**



12...♘c5

12...b4? is again bad because of 13 ♘d5!, and after 13...exd5 14 exd5 ♔f8 15 ♖xe7! ♔xe7 16 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 17 dxc6 Black's defences quickly collapse.

13 e5?

An inaccurate formulation of an interesting idea. 13 ♗xf6! is correct, since here 13...gxf6?! would have spoiled the pawn formation: 14 ♔b1 (not 14 ♗d5?! b4! Strekalovsky-Polugayevsky, Sverdlovsk 1958) 14...0-0-0 (14...b4?! 15 ♘d5! Tal-Johannsson, Stockholm 1961) 15 a3! ♔b8 16 f5 ♘xb3 17 cxb3 with advantage to White.

And 13...♗xf6 14 e5 dxe5 would have transposed into a position from the game (it is hardly any better to play 14...♗h4 15 g3 ♗d8 16 exd6 0-0 17 a3 ♗f6 18 ♗a2 Korchnoi-Polugayevsky, Sochi 1958).

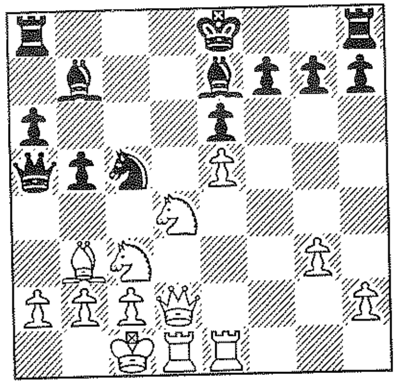
13...dxe5 14 ♗xf6

There is no choice: 14 fxe5 is unfavourable on account of 14...♘fe4! 15 ♘xe4 ♕xd2+ 16 ♗xd2 ♗xe4.

14...♗xf6?

An error in return, and the source of all Black's later sufferings. Without hesitation a modern grandmaster would have replied 14...gxf6! 15 fxe5 0-0-0! 16 exf6 ♗xf6 17 ♕f2 ♗g7 with the bishop pair and an excellent game. Such is the price of a move in the Sicilian – one inaccuracy leads to an instant change of scene!

15 fxe5 ♗h4 16 g3 ♗e7



For complete happiness it only remains for Black to castle, but here Spassky finds a spectacular blow at the e6-point, beginning an immediate battle.

17 ♗xe6!

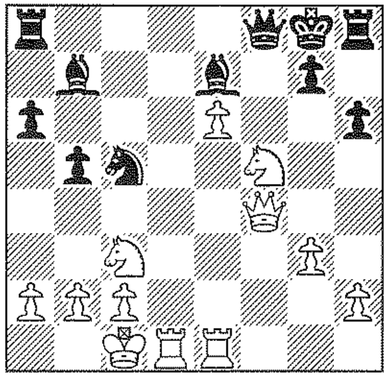
The old comment by Spassky and the master Dmitry Rovner, who was then helping him, makes interesting reading: '*One of those little combinations, which are often a necessary addition to the completion of an attack. The move in the game emphasises the drawbacks of the move 6...♘bd7 (it does not fight for the d4-square).*' This categorical assertion in the spirit of Tarrasch or Botvinnik is largely based on the fact that White won the game. A fascinating modern analysis with the help of a computer shows that it is still a long way to *the completion of the attack*.

17...0-0?

Not everyone is capable of retaining their composure, on receiving such a 'gift'. And Polugayevsky decided to give up a pawn, if only to remove his king from the fire. He even reconciled himself to a lengthening of the operating diagonal of the opponent's light-squared bishop, although this makes Black's position more than difficult.

All the commentators mentioned only the helpless position of the black king after 17...fxe6? 18 ♘xe6 ♖d8 (18...♘xe6 19 ♕d7+ ♔f7 20 ♖f1+) 19 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 20 ♕h6, or 17...♘xe6? 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♕d7+ ♔f7 20 ♖f1+. It is no better to play 17...b4? 18 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 19 ♕f4+ ♔e8 20 ♘f5 ♘e6 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 exd6, or 17...♖d8? 18 ♗xf7+! (18 ♗b3 b4 19 ♕f4! 0-0, as in the game) 18...♔xf7 19 ♕f4+ ♔e8 (19...♔g6? 20 ♕f5+ ♔h6 21 ♘e6 and wins) 20 ♘f5 with a powerful attack.

But a player without nerves – a computer – unexpectedly replies 17...♕d8!, defending the weak d7-square and creating the threat of ...♗g5. White has no particular choice – 18 ♗xf7+! (not 18 ♕f2?! fxe6 19 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♕b6 ♗c8 22 ♕c6+ ♗d7! 23 ♕xa6 0-0 with excellent compensation for the queen) 18...♔xf7 19 ♕f4+ ♔g8 20 ♘f5! (little is promised by 20 ♘dxb5 ♕f8 21 ♕c4+ ♕f7 22 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 with equality) 20...♕f8! 21 e6! (21 ♘d5?! ♗xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♘e6) 21...h6.



Analysis diagram

22 h4! (the only way – 22 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 gives only insufficient compensation for the piece: 23 ♘d5 ♗xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♖c8; 23 ♕f7+ ♕xf7 24 exf7+ ♔xf7 25 b4 ♖he8 26 bxc5 ♖xe1 27 ♖xe1 ♖c8; 23 b4 ♘xe6 24 ♖d6! ♗c8 25 ♘d5 ♘xf4!? 26 ♘xe7+ ♔f7 27 ♘xc8 ♖hxc8 28 gxf4 ♖c4, and a draw is the most probable outcome), and suddenly a new hero bursts onto the scene – the b-pawn:

1) 22...g6 23 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 24 b4! ♖f8 25 ♕e5 ♗f3 26 bxc5 ♗xd1 27 ♘d5 ♕g7 28 e7 ♕xe5 29 exf8♕+ ♔xf8 30 ♖xe5 ♗f3 31 c6 ♗xd5 32 ♖xd5 and wins;

2) 22...♖e8 23 b4! ♘xe6 24 ♖xe6 ♗xb4 25 ♖xe8 ♗a3+ 26 ♔b1 ♕xe8 27 ♕c7 ♕g6 28 ♖d7! ♕xf5 29 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 30 ♖d7 ♔g8 31 ♕xb7 and wins;

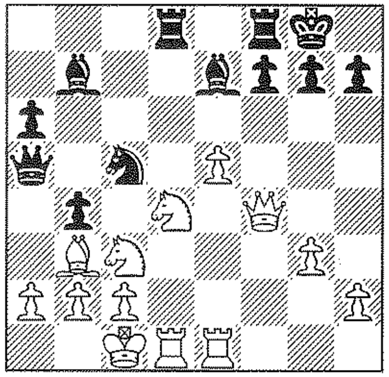
3) 22...♔h7 23 b4! ♗f6 24 e7 ♕c8! 25 ♘d5!! (25 ♘d6 ♘b3+ 26 axb3 ♕xc3 27 ♘xb7 ♕b2+ 28 ♔d2 ♕c3+ 29 ♔e2 ♕xc2+ 30 ♖d2 ♕g6 31 ♖d6 ♖he8 is unclear) 25...♗xd5 26 ♘d6! ♘b3+! 27 axb3 ♕xc3 28 ♕f5+! g6 29 ♕xd5 ♕b2+ 30 ♔d2 ♕c3+ 31 ♔e2 ♗xe7 32 ♘e4! ♕g7 33 ♖f1 ♖hf8 34 ♕e6 ♖a7 35 c3 and White should win.

Thus, after the best move 17...♕d8! White would nevertheless have retained what is probably a decisive advantage, but the young Spassky would have had to find a whole series of brilliant moves.

18 ♗b3

The simple 18 ♗d5! was also good, giving White a powerful initiative after 18...b4 19 ♘f5 ♖ae8 20 ♘e4 ♘xe4 21 ♖xe4, and a great advantage in the endgame after 18...♗xd5 19 ♘xd5 ♕xd2+ 20 ♔xd2 ♗g5+ 21 ♔e2.

18...♖ad8 19 ♕f4 b4



20 ♘a4!?

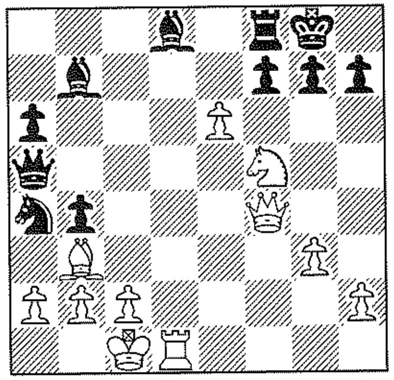
In the book *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins* this spectacular move is accompanied by two exclamation marks, although I would have preferred the simple 20 ♘f5! with an obvious advantage: 20...♘xb3+ (if 20...♖de8, then White has the decisive 21 ♘a4! ♘xa4 22 ♖d7 ♘c5 23 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 24 ♗xf7! ♘xd7 25 ♘g6+! hxg6 26 ♕h4 mate) 21 axb3 bxc3 22 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 23 ♔b1 etc.

20...h6?

Completely knocked out of his stride by the cascade of sacrifices, Polugayevsky again does not take the piece, although this would have made it harder for his opponent to win. 'After 20...♘xa4,' write Spassky and Rovner, 'White was intending to reply 21 ♘f5 ♖xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♗c5 23 ♕g5 g6 24 ♘h6+ *(24 ♕f6 gxf5 25 ♖d7 is also strong – G.K.)* 24...♔g7 25 ♘g4 and wins. Or 22...♗d8 23 ♗xa4 *(? – G.K.)*, and 23...♕xa4? fails to 24 ♖xd8! ♖xd8 25 ♕g5.'

However, in the latter variation, after 23...h6! the threat of ...♗g5 (the same combinative motif as with 17...♕d8!; a human may miss it, but a machine – never!) gives Black a highly important tempo, and it is now White who has to think of how to save the game: 24 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 25 ♗b3 ♕b6 26 ♘d6 ♕g1+ 27 ♔d2 ♕g2+ 28 ♔e3 ♗d5 or 24 h4 ♕xa4 25 ♕g4 g6 26 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 27 ♘xf7! ♗e7! 28 ♘d6 ♖f2 29 ♕c4 ♕c6 30 ♕d3 ♗a8.

Even so, Spassky could have hoped to win, if in reply to the cunning 22...♗d8! he had found the no less worthy reply 23 e6!!

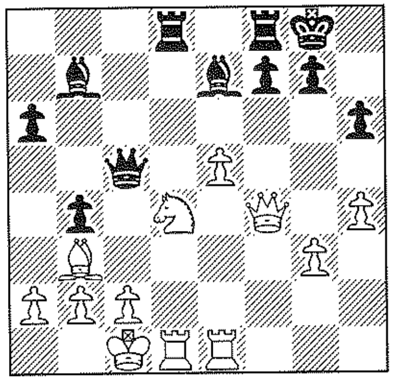


Analysis diagram

Now it is weak to play both 23...fxe6? 24 ♘h6+! gxh6 25 ♗xe6+ ♔g7 26 ♖d7+ with mate, and 23...♗f6? 24 ♘h6+! ♔h8 (perhaps it is more practical to play 24...gxh6 25 ♕xf6 ♕g5+ 26 ♕xg5 hxg5 27 exf7+ ♔g7 28 ♗xa4 ♖xf7 with some drawing chances) 25 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 26 e7 ♗xe7 27 ♘d6+ ♔h8 28 ♘xb7 ♕h5 29 ♖d8! ♖xd8 30 ♘xd8 ♗g5 31 ♘f7+ ♕xf7 32 ♗xf7 ♗xf4+ 33 gxf4 with a pretty win. There remains 23...♘c5, and then White has probably only one way to gain an advantage: 24 e7! ♘xb3+ 25 axb3 ♗xe7 26 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 27 ♕d6! ♖e8 28 ♕d7 ♖b8 29 ♔b1 etc.

As is evident from the notes to White's 18th and 20th moves, there was no need for such excitement. Nevertheless, Spassky, an artist by nature, simply could not deny himself (and the spectators!) the pleasure of playing more spectacularly. In the period of his ascent to the chess heights he was notable for his phenomenal intuition, especially when conducting an attack, and at times he did not trouble himself with precise calculation. On this occasion too his intuition did not let him down. The game was judged the most brilliant in the tournament, apparently not only on account of the stroke 17 ♗xe6!, but also thanks to the unexpected leap 20 ♘a4!?

21 ♘xc5! ♕xc5 22 h4

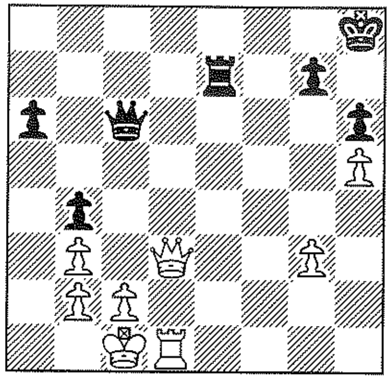


The smoke over the field of this brief (all of five moves!) but fierce battle has cleared. White is a pawn up with a continuing initiative.

22...♗d5 23 ♘f5 ♗xb3 24 axb3 ♖xd1+ 25 ♖xd1 ♖c8 26 ♕e4 ♗f8 27 e6 fxe6 28 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 29 ♕e4 ♕c6 30 ♕d3

The immediate exchange of queens would also have been decisive – 30 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 31 h5 ♖f6 32 g4 g6 33 hxg6 ♖xg6 34 ♖d8 ♖g8 35 ♔d1 etc., but for the moment Spassky strengthens his position.

30...♖e8 31 h5 ♗e7 32 ♘xe7 ♖xe7



33 ♕g6! ♕e8 34 g4 ♖e1 35 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 36 ♖d4 a5 37 ♔d2 ♖e5 38 c3 bxc3+ 39 bxc3 ♖g5 40 c4 ♔g8 41 ♖f4! g6 1-0

Black sealed this last move, but resigned the game without resuming.

It appeared that Spassky was guaranteed, if not the gold medal of the championship of the country, then at least qualification for the Interzonal tournament. But apparently at this moment he was seized with a passionate desire to win his first Russian 'gold' at all costs (after all, in 1956, after the additional three-player match-tournament, he had finished only with the 'bronze'). That is, the championship in Riga was to crown the start of the future world champion's star-studded career.

And here something incredible happened: Spassky collapsed, being unable to withstand the burden of leading the tournament. In the next five games he gained only three draws with two defeats – against Gurgenidze and Kotov (by no means the strongest players in the championship). And before the last round the situation was now completely different: Tal and Petrosian were leading, with Bronstein half a point, and Spassky and Averbakh a point behind them. Five contenders for four qualifying places! Three of them agreed draws in their final games and (as ill luck would have it!) there remained only the Spassky-Tal battle.

We shall now analyse this uncommonly dramatic game, which left an indelible impression on Spassky's entire further career. The duel of the two future chess kings not only had enormous competitive importance, but also a considerable psychological implication. At that time Tal's star was rising sharply and this, it seems to me, slightly unnerved Spassky, and provoked a certain jealousy in him – after all, not long ago he had been the unquestioned leader of the young generation! During the game it was therefore not easy for him to evaluate the situation properly, and if necessary 'with an iron hand' to make a draw (giving him the right to a play-off match for fourth place with Averbakh). Boris was eager to win!

Game 50

B.Spassky-M.Tal

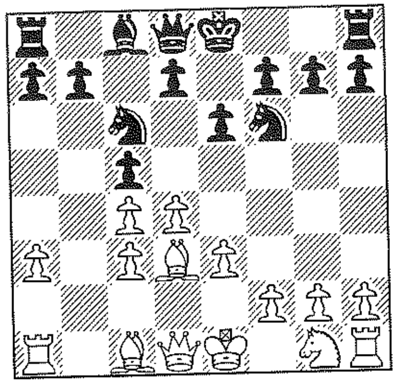
25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958
Nimzo-Indian Defence E26

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 a3

'In our preparations for the game we considered 4 ♗g5 and 4 e3, which are usually employed by Spassky. The Sämisch Variation came as a surprise, and so I decided to avoid the well-trodden paths.' (Tal)

It seems to me that the Sämisch was fully in accordance with the creative views of the young Spassky: the two bishops, a solid centre and possibilities of creating an attack – even if the weak c4-pawn should perish in the process!

4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 (later, in his matches with Botvinnik, Tal played only 5...♘e4?! or 5...b6 – *Volume 2, Game No.74*) **6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♗d3**



7...e5?!

Avoiding the classical 7...0-0 8 ♘e2 b6 9 0-0 ♗a6 10 e4 ♘e8 (*Volume 2, Game No.91*).

8 ♘e2 (8 d5 e4!) **8...e4 9 ♗b1 b6 10 ♘g3 ♗a6**

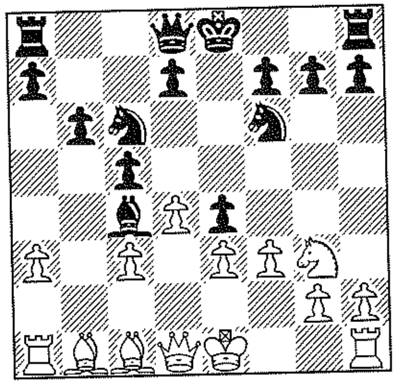
Tal, to give him his due, had a splendid ability to create complicated, atypical positions straight from the opening. Thus here he exchanges his e-pawn for the c-pawn, immediately trying to gain play on the light squares.

11 f3!

An excellent move, opening lines for an attack. 'After 11 ♕a4 ♘a5 12 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖c8 Black re-establishes material equality, maintaining a good position. 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗xc4 13 f3 was unclear.' (Tal)

11...♗xc4

After 11...exf3 12 ♕xf3 ♗xc4 13 ♘f5 0-0 14 e4 White has a powerful initiative for the pawn.



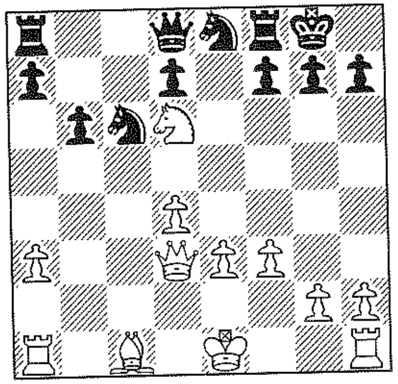
12 ♘f5?!

Deviating from the correct path: now White cannot avoid simplification. In my view, 12 fxe4! was the only way to fight for an advantage. For example:

1) 12...d6 13 ♗a2! (this is much stronger than the line considered by Tal – 13 ♕f3 0-0! 14 e5?! dxe5 15 ♕xc6 exd4 with a dangerous attack for the sacrificed piece: 16 cxd4 ♖c8 17 ♕a4 cxd4) 13...♗xa2 14 ♖xa2 0-0 15 0-0 ♖e8 16 ♖af2 (or 16 ♖f4 b5 17 ♖af2) 16...♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♖xf7 ♖e7 19 ♖7f5 with unpleasant pressure;

2) 12...0-0 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♕g4! (not 14 ♕h5? g6 15 ♕h6 f5! 16 e4 fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♕e7) 14...g6 (14...♘xc3? 15 ♘h5! g6 16 ♘f6+ and 17 e4, winning) 15 ♗d2 d6 16 e4 ♘xc3! (if 16...♘de7, then 17 ♘h5! dxe5 18 d5) 17 ♗xc3 cxd4 18 ♗d2 ♘xe5 (18...dxe5? 19 h4! d3 20 h5 ♕d4 21 ♖a2! f5 22 ♕h4 and wins) 19 ♕f4 ♖e8 with a double-edged game: Black has good play as compensation for the piece.

12...0-0 13 ♘d6 ♗d3 14 ♗xd3 (now 14 fxe4 is not so effective: 14...♗xb1 15 ♖xb1 ♘e8! 16 ♘f5 ♘e7!, evicting the knight from both d6 and f5) **14...exd3 15 ♕xd3 cxd4 16 cxd4 ♘e8!**



In principle the position is now equal: Black has counterplay on the light squares.

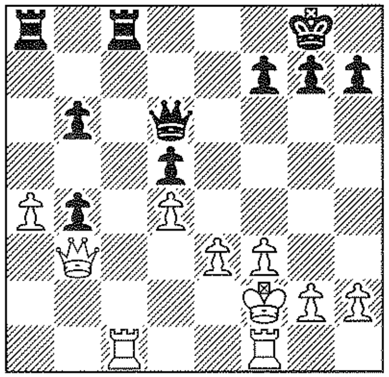
17 ♘f5 d5 18 a4! (with the threat of ♗a3) **18...♘d6!**

If Black tries to occupy the c4-square by 18...g6 19 ♘g3 ♘d6 White can reply 20 0-0 ♖e8 21 e4 with prospects of an attack, although after 21...♕h4! it is not easy for him to exploit the weakness of the dark squares. For example: 22 ♗a3 ♘c4 23 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 24 exd5 ♕xd4+ 25 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 26 d6 ♖ed8 27 ♖fd1 ♘e6 28 d7 ♖c7 29 ♖xc4! ♖xc4 30 ♗e7 ♖c7 31 ♘e4! f5 32 ♘f6+ ♔f7 33 ♗xd8 ♘xd8 with a probable draw.

19 ♘xd6 (if 19 ♗a3 ♘xf5 20 ♗xf8?, then 20...♕g5!) **19...♕xd6 20 ♗a3 ♘b4 21 ♕b3 a5 22 0-0 ♖fc8 23 ♖ac1**

'In this position, which is fairly simple and equal, I offered a draw, having calculated the variation 23...♕e6 24 ♗xb4 axb4 25 ♔f2 ♕d6 26 ♔g1 ♕e6.' (Tal) But he received a refusal.

23...♕e6 24 ♗xb4 (nothing is promised by 24 e4 dxe4 25 ♕xe6 fxe6 26 fxe4 ♘d3 27 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 28 d5 exd5 29 exd5 ♘c5 with equality) **24...axb4 25 ♔f2 ♕d6**



26 h3!?

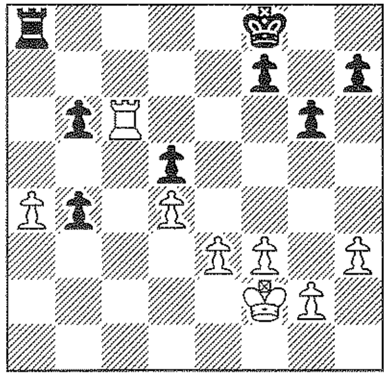
Spassky's decision to continue playing, in my opinion, contained a considerable amount of psychology – there is a hint of resentment 'at the entire world': after all, just a few days earlier he was on the verge of becoming champion, and was two points ahead of Tal. However, he had made a mess of the finish and his opponent was now a point ahead. But it is well known that anger is a poor adviser, and Spassky had to pay dearly for his decision. On the other hand, in the purely chess sense it was not such a sin to carry on playing a little, seeing as in his youth Tal did not like dry, tedious positions and could well make a mistake. Surprisingly, this is in fact exactly what happened!

It is hard to say whether or not Spassky was right here. More probably, he was simply unable to accept a draw. He was too ambitious to accept the fact that Tal would finish ahead of him in the final table for the second successive year! And he decided on principle to battle 'to the end' – to endeavour with all his might to win or at least spoil Tal's festive mood (this event took place in Riga, and Tal's fans were impatient to record another success by their home-town favourite). But nevertheless, strictly by position, White had no grounds for refusing the draw.

26...♔f8?!

A routine move, made without proper consideration. It would appear that the opponent's 'audacity' unsettled Tal: 'Why?! After all, the position is clearly drawn!' And indeed, after the simple 26...h5 27 h4 ♖c6! (but not 27...♖xc1?! 28 ♖xc1 ♕h2 29 ♕xd5 ♕xh4+ 30 ♔e2 ♖d8 31 ♕e5) Black has not even a hint of any problem.

27 ♖c2! (promptly seizing control of the file) **27...♖xc2+ 28 ♕xc2 g6 29 ♖c1 ♕d7 30 ♕c6 ♕xc6 31 ♖xc6**



In the resulting rook endgame White has a slight (rather, even hypothetical) initiative.

31...♖a6?!

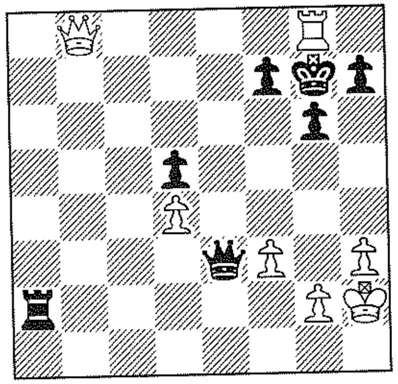
Perhaps this is also the result of vexation. In Tal's opinion, it was more accurate to play

31...♖xa4 32 ♖xb6 ♔e7 with equality. But even stronger was 31...b5! 32 axb5 ♖b8 33 ♔e2 b3 34 ♔d2 b2 35 ♔c2 ♖xb5 36 ♔b1 ♖b3 37 e4 ♖d3 with a dead draw. However, nothing in particular has changed for the moment: 31...♖a6?! certainly does not lose the game, but merely leads to the appearance of two new queens and a sharp intensification of the play.

32 a5! b3! (not 32...♖xa5?! 33 ♖xb6 ♖a4 34 ♖b5 ♔e7 35 ♖xd5 ♖a2+ 36 ♔g3 b3 37 ♖b5 b2 38 ♔f4) **33 axb6 b2 34 b7 b1♕ 35 ♖c8+ ♔g7 36 b8♕**

'It is amusing that the two pawns have queened on the same file.' (Tal)

36...♖a2+ 37 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 38 ♔h2 (not 38 ♔f4?? ♖xg2!) **38...♕xe3 39 ♖g8+**



39...♔f6?

In time-trouble Tal misses an easy draw: 39...♔h6! 40 ♕f8+ ♔h5 41 ♕xf7 ♖xg2+! 42 ♔xg2 ♕d2+ 43 ♔g3 ♕g5+ with perpetual check. It is hard to say why he didn't play this: it would not have caused him any difficulty to find such a simple sacrifice as ...♖xg2+. Perhaps he was attracted by the pretty variation with ...♖d2! (see the next note), or perhaps he thought that a draw could be achieved 'as he pleased'. However, it is from this point (or more precisely, after the repetition of moves and 44 h4!) that Black begins to face very serious problems.

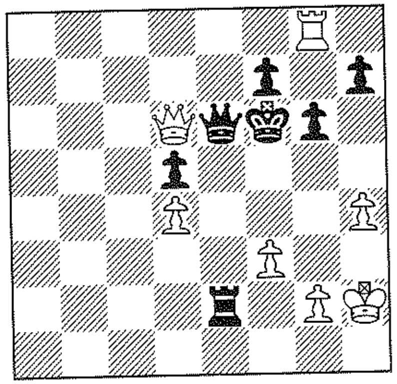
40 ♕d6+

Not 40 h4? ♖xg2+! with a draw, and especially not 40 ♖e8? ♕xd4 41 ♖e2 ♖d2! 42 ♕h8+ ♔f5 (or 42...♔g5 43 ♕d8+ f6) 43 ♕c8+ ♔g5 44 ♕c1 ♕f4+ 45 ♔h1 ♖d4! with an extra pawn.

40...♕e6 41 ♕f4+ ♕f5 42 ♕d6+ ♕e6 43 ♕g3 ♕e3 44 h4! ♖e2

Tal attaches an exclamation mark to this move, and later fails to comment on a number of important, turning points in the game. Possibly more resources would have been retained by 44...♖a6!? (defending the sixth rank) 45 ♕b8(c7) h5!, but not 45...♕xd4? 46 ♕d8+ ♔e5 47 ♖e8+ ♖e6 48 ♕g5+ ♔d6 (48...f5? 49 f4+) 49 ♖d8+ with a mating attack: 49...♔c6 50 ♕c1+ ♔b7 (50...♔b5 51 ♕b1+) 51 ♕c8+ ♔b6 52 ♕b8+ ♔a5 53 ♔h3! ♖b6 54 ♕a8+ ♔b4 55 ♖xd5, or 49...♔c5 50 ♕c1+ ♕c4 51 ♖c8+ ♖c6 52 ♕e3+ ♔b5 53 ♖b8+ ♔a4 54 ♕d2!! ♕xh4+ 55 ♔g1 and wins.

45 ♕d6+ ♕e6



The adjourned position, which the two players analysed with their helpers all night. This 'night before the battle' has been absorbingly described by many authors, in particular Viktor Vasiliev in his story *The Tal Enigma*, and Yuri Averbakh in his article 'Mikhail Tal's hour of triumph' (*Shakhmaty v Rossii* 1996 Nos.10-11). Analysing such adjourned positions – both for White and for Black – is rather unpleasant: neither a win, nor a draw is obvious.

According to some accounts, Boris did not find a clear way to win, but since Tal's king was constantly rushing about under the attack of the white pieces, in the end he decided: 'Tomorrow I'll mate him! But now it's time to sleep.' According to other reports, when Spassky sat down at the board he looked exhausted, but... meeting Petrosian on his way to the resumption, he said with a smile: 'Today you will become the champion.'

46 ♕f4+!

This, the sealed move, is the strongest. It is harmless to play 46 ♕d8+ ♕e7 47 ♖e8 (47 ♕xd5 ♖xg2+! 48 ♔xg2 ♕e2+ 49 ♔g3 ♕e1+ with perpetual check) 47...♕xd8 48 ♖xd8 ♖d2 49 ♖xd5 ♔e6 50 ♖e5+ ♔d7 51 ♖e4 f5 with a draw.

46...♕f5 (after 46...♔e7?! 47 h5! White acquires additional checks) **47 ♕h6 ♔e7** (47...♕xf3? 48 ♕g5+) **48 ♕f8+ ♔f6 49 ♕g7+ ♔e7 50 ♖a8! ♕d7**

'50...♕f4+ 51 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 52 ♔g3 is bad.' (Spassky)

51 ♕f8+ ♔f6 52 ♖a6+

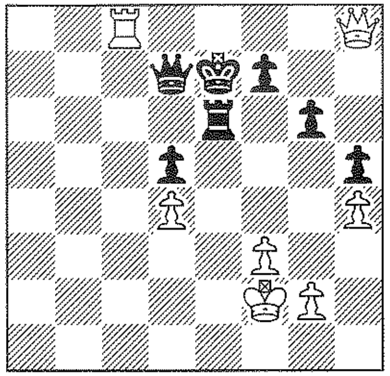
For the moment this is all more or less forced, and Boris plays accurately (they evidently looked at this position at home). The following was a false trail – 52 ♖d8? ♕c7+ 53 ♔h3 ♖e1 54 ♖d6+ ♔f5! (an unexpected breakthrough by the king) 55 ♖xd5+ (or 55 g3 ♖h1+ 56 ♔g2 ♕c2+! 57 ♔xh1 ♕d1+ 58 ♔g2 ♕e2+) 55...♔e6, with a draw after both 56 ♖c5 ♖h1+ 57 ♔g4 f5+ 58 ♔g5 ♕g3+ 59 ♔h6 ♕xh4+ 60 ♔g7 ♕h6+ 61 ♔g8 ♕xf8+ 62 ♔xf8 ♖g1 and (the key variation) 56 ♕d8 ♖h1+ 57 ♔g4 ♖xh4+! 58 ♔xh4 ♕h2+ 59 ♔g4 ♕xg2+ 60 ♔f4 ♕d2+.

52...♖e6 53 ♕h8+ ♔e7 54 ♖a8 ♖e1?! (the immediate 54...h5 was better) **55 ♔g3! h5!**

'The attempt to give perpetual check would have been unsuccessful: 55...♕c7+ 56 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 57 ♔xe1 ♕c1+ 58 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 59 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 60 ♔g4 f5+ 61 ♔g5 ♕e3+ 62 f4 ♕g3+ 63 ♔h6 ♕xh4+ *(or 63...♕xf4+ 64 ♔xh7 ♕xh4+ 65 ♔g8, winning – G.K.)* 64 ♔g7 ♕f6+ 65 ♔xh7 ♕h4+ 66 ♔g8. With the move in the game Black prepares a refuge for his king on f5.' (Tal) And he takes away the g4-square from the white king. It would appear that the 'magician of Riga' considered the resulting position to be drawn.

56 ♔f2 (White must avoid ...♕c7+ and ...♕c2+ with perpetual check) **56...♖e6 57 ♖c8!**

Not 57 g4? ♕c7. 'Now Black can move only his rook. His queen is tied to the defence of the squares d5 and e8.' (Tal)



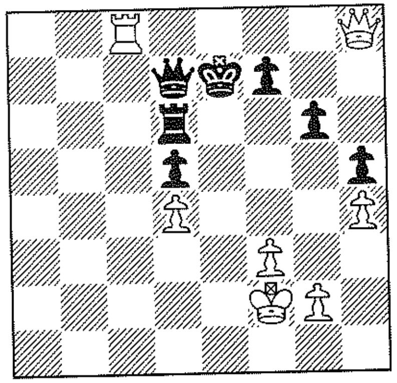
57...♖d6?

This was thought to be forced, but in fact it is the losing move. The only chance was 57...♖c6! According to Tal, this did not work on account of 58 ♕f8+ ♔f6 59 ♖d8 ♕c7 60 ♕h8+ ♔e7(6) 61 ♖e8+ *(nothing is achieved by 61 ♕e8+ ♔f6 62 ♖c8 ♖c2+ 63 ♔e3 ♖c3+ – G.K.)* 61...♔d7 62 ♖e5 'and White carries out a favourable regrouping of his forces.' However, after 62...♖e6! Black could still have fought for a draw, for example: 63 ♖xd5+ ♔e7 64 ♖b5! (64 ♖e5?! ♖xe5 65 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 66 dxe5 ♔e6 67 f4 f6 68 exf6 ♔xf6 draws) 64...♕c2+ 65 ♔g3 ♕c7+ 66 ♖e5 ♔d7! (but not 66...♖xe5? 67 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5+ 68 dxe5 ♔e6 69 ♔f4 ♔d5 70 g4 hxg4 71 fxg4 ♔e6 72 ♔g5 ♔xe5 73 h5 and wins) 67 ♕g7 ♔e7 68 ♔h3 ♖xe5 69 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 70 dxe5 ♔e6 71 f4 f6.

It is possible that after 57...♖c6! the only way to retain an advantage is by 58 ♕e5+! ♖e6 59 ♕g5+ ♖f6 60 ♖a8!, transposing into the attack, in the note to White's 62nd move, examined below.

If this position is indeed lost for Black, then his decisive mistake would have been virtually 39...♔f6?, or perhaps 44...♖e2.

But let us return to the culminating point of the game, and indeed of the entire championship.



58 ♕f8+

Annotating the game in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1958 No.5), Tal does not comment on either this move, or White's next. But it was here that Spassky missed a certain win! Soon afterwards this was demonstrated with some analysis by the Leningrad master Vitaly Chekhover in *Shakhmatnaya Moskva*: 58 g4! hxg4 (forced: 58...♖e6 59 g5 ♖c6 60 ♕f8+ ♔e6 61 ♖e8+ ♔f5 62 ♖e7) 59 ♕f8+ ♔f6 60 fxg4 ♖e6 (if 60...♖c6, then 61 ♖e8! ♖c2+ 62 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 63 ♔f4 ♕c7+ 64 ♖e5! etc.) 61 ♖c3! ♖e4 62 ♖f3+ ♔e6 63 g5 ♕e7 (if 63...♖xd4 White wins by 64 ♖f6+ ♔e5 65 ♕b8+) 64 ♕c8+ ♔d6 (or 64...♕d7 65 ♖f6+ ♔e7 66 ♖xf7+) 65 ♕c5+ ♔d7 66 ♕xd5+, with a win after 66...♔e8 67 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 68 ♖e3 ♕e6 69 d5 etc.

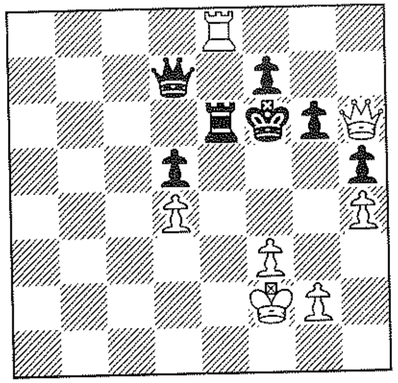
This is all correct, and I would merely add 60...♖a6 61 ♔f3!? (not falling for 61 ♖d8? ♕c7 62 ♕h8+ ♔e6 63 ♕e8+ ♔f6 64 g5+ ♔f5 65 ♖xd5+ ♔g4 etc.) 61...♖a1 62 ♕h8+! (again not 62 ♖d8? ♖f1+ 63 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 64 ♔f2 ♖g2+! 65 ♔xg2 ♕xg4+ 66 ♔f2 ♕xd4+ with perpetual check) 62...♔e7 63 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 64 ♔g5 f6+ 65 ♔h6 and the curtain can be lowered.

58...♔f6 59 ♖e8?

Here too White could have won by 59 g4! hxg4 60 fxg4, transposing into the variations we have just examined (it is surprising that the idea of g2-g4 was not found in the adjournment analysis). Now, however, things are considerably more difficult for him.

59...♖e6 60 ♕h8+ ♔f5 61 ♕h6 ♔f6

Of course, not 61...♖xe8?? 62 ♕g5+ ♔e6 63 ♕e5 mate.



62 ♕h8+?!

As Tal correctly remarked, 62 ♖d8 ♕c6 63 ♕g5+ ♔g7 64 ♕xd5 (64 ♖xd5? f6) would have allowed Black to seize the initiative: 64...♕c2+ 65 ♔g3 ♕c7+ 66 ♔f2 ♕f4. But no one has pointed out that 62 ♖g8! would still have retained serious winning chances. For example: 62...♔e7 63 ♕g5+ ♖f6 64 ♖a8! ♕b7 65 ♖a2! (unexpectedly broadening the attacking front) 65...♕c6 66 ♕e5+! ♔f8 67 ♖a5 ♔g7 68 ♖xd5 and Black can hardly save himself by 68...♕e6 69 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 70 ♖e5 ♖b6 71 ♔e3 ♖b2 72 d5! ♔f6 73 ♖e8 etc.

62...♔f5 63 ♖d8? (it was still not too late for 63 ♕h6! ♔f6 64 ♖g8!) **63...♕c6!**

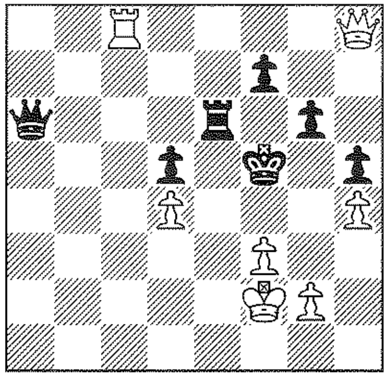
Black has managed to become active and is threatening to launch a dangerous counterattack.

64 ♖c8

Tal attaches a question mark to this move, considering 64 ♔g3 to be essential. However, it was also acceptable to play 64 ♕f8 ♔f6 with a draw. Spassky continued playing for a win through inertia, but he suddenly noticed the opponent's unpleasant reply and, according to an eye-witness, 'with a strangely changed voice offered a draw'.

64...♕a6

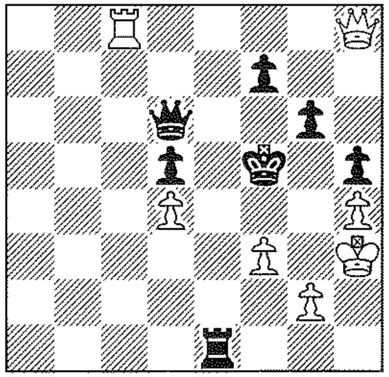
With the words 'Let's play on a bit'.



65 ♔g3?

But this is indeed a step towards disaster! 65 ♕d8! ♕e2+ 66 ♔g3 (Spassky) would have led to a draw, for example: 66...♕e1+ 67 ♔h2 f6! 68 ♕xd5+ ♔f4 69 ♖c1! ♕xh4+ 70 ♔g1 ♖e1+ 71 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 72 ♔h2.

65...♕d6+ 66 ♔h3 (66 ♔f2? ♕b4! and wins) **66...♖e1**



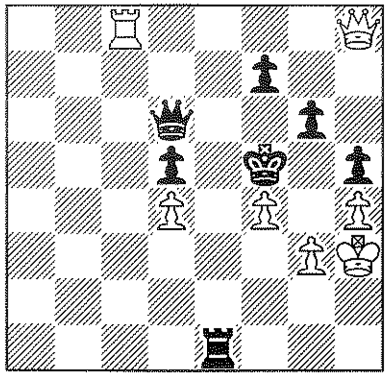
67 g3?

Good or bad, 67 g4+! ♔f4 68 ♖c3 hxg4+ 69 fxg4 was essential, when both kings are in danger. Whether Black could have converted his extra pawn after 69...♖e3+ 70 ♖xe3 ♔xe3 71 h5! ♔f4 72 h6 f6! 73 ♔g2 ♕e7 74 ♕b8+ ♔g5! 75 h7! ♕xh7 76 ♕b3 ♕g8! is a question that demands a separate study.

67...♖g1?!

According to Tal, 67...♕a6! was unclear on account of 68 g4+, but in fact this would have immediately forced mate: 68...♔f4 69 ♕h6+ ♔xf3 70 ♖c3+ ♔e4 71 ♔g3 ♕f1.

68 f4 ♖e1



69 ♖c2?

Better practical chances were offered by the transition into a difficult, objectively lost queen endgame: 69 ♖e8 ♖xe8 70 ♕xe8 ♕e6! 71 ♕a4 ♔e4+ 72 ♔g2 ♕c8! 73 ♔f2 ♕c3 74 ♕e8+ ♔d3 75 ♕xf7 ♕xd4+ 76 ♔f1 ♕e4 77 ♔f2 ♔d2. Obviously Spassky was demoralised by the sudden reversal of roles: the hunter had been transformed into the hunted!

69...♕e6 70 ♖f2?

Now White gets mated. He could have prolonged the resistance by 70 ♕c8 ♕xc8 71 ♖xc8 ♖e4 72 ♖c7 f6 73 ♔g2 ♖xd4, when Black should win the rook ending.

70...♖h1+ 71 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 72 ♖f3 ♔g4 73 ♕c8+ f5 0-1

74 ♕c3 ♖h3!

As a result of this game the 'devilishly lucky' Tal finished half a point ahead of Petrosian and was carried from the stage by his madly delighted supporters, while the 'emotionally unstable' Spassky, furtively wiping away his tears, retired downcast behind the scenes. What drama – to remain the 'unlucky fifth'! The collapse of all his hopes...

After this truly historic encounter the roads to the top of these friends and rivals diverged for a long time. Tal soared upwards like a comet: after winning the USSR Championship for the second time, he brilliantly won the Interzonal, and the Candidates tournament, and the match with Botvinnik. Whereas Spassky, by contrast, missed out on the battle for the world crown for six whole years, after suffering a similar failure at the finish of the next Zonal USSR Championship, the 28th (1961).

Two world championship cycles without Spassky looked rather strange, since his chess strength was unquestioned. But, as is well known, the components of chess success are not only strength and understanding of the game, but also psychological stability, and the ability to compose oneself at critical moments. Later on, in his best years, Spassky was able to draw lessons from these catastrophes and would play very well in decisive games. But then, in the late fifties to early sixties, his nervous system was not yet ready for such severe tests.

In later years Spassky defeated Tal several times in tournaments, but he gained real revenge only in 1965, by defeating his former tormentor in the final Candidates match. During the years when he was in the shade, he learned much. And after his defeat in the match for the world championship with Petrosian (1966) he was able to repeat Smyslov's feat: he won the next Candidates cycle and then pierced the armour of 'iron Tigran' in 1969.

In his Element

Boris Vasilievich was the only top-class player of his generation who played gambits regularly and without fear. Before then (and also during his time) this weapon was often used by Bronstein, but it would appear that Spassky was even more aggressive and successful. This inclination towards gambits was to be with him all his career, and his results here are simply staggering! For example, over a period of 30 years he did not lose a single game with the King's Gambit, and among those defeated were numerous strong players of all generations, from Averbakh, Bronstein and Fischer, to Seirawan.

Moreover, Spassky played gambits not from a striving for originality or a desire to revive the spirit of past masters, but because the resulting positions were close to his heart. A strong, mobile centre, active piece play, the prospect of an attack on the king – here he was in his element. And even when he did not gain a direct attack, and had to be satisfied with a positional advantage, he confidently gained wins thanks to subtle piece play and the skilful exploitation of weaknesses in the opponent's position.

It is noteworthy that Spassky never in his life began a game with 1 ♘f3 – this apparently seemed to him to be a 'half-move', whereas a normal move was only one leading to an open battle. All these opening subtleties – avoid this, don't allow that – sickened him. And usually he played the opening rather straightforwardly, choosing 'frontal' set-ups, although in so doing he had an excellent feeling for the psychology itself of the game. Spassky was the first of the great players who employed both 1 e4 and 1 d4 in equal measure and with identical success. His blending of these moves was more harmonious than with the other world champions (perhaps only I can be said to have a similar blend).

In those years one was not required to work so purposefully on the opening as one is today, and it was possible to play 'at sight', and it was here that Spassky's best qualities, his natural attacking style, displayed themselves. In gambits he had, so to speak, mirror interests: he upheld both 1 e4 e5 2 f4, and 1 d4 d5 2 c4 – from 2...e6 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 e4!? dxe4 6 d5 f5 7 ♗f4! ♗d6 8 ♗b5+ ♔f7 9 ♘h3 ♘f6 10 ♗c4 (Spassky-Bronstein, Leningrad 1957) to 2...c6 3 ♘f3 e6 4 g3!? dxc4 5 ♗g2 b5 6 0-0 ♗b7 7 b3! cxb3 8 ♕xb3 ♘f6 9 ♘c3 ♗e7 10 ♘e5! (Spassky-Zinn, Marianske Lazne 1962). He skilfully reduced many queen's pawn set-ups to 'his own' positions with a mobile centre, rapid development and weakened position of the enemy king.

Often his positions from the opening left something to be desired, and his opponents could have set him difficult problems – as, for example, in his famous game with Fischer (Mar del Plata 1960) or the game with Pachman analysed below. But here it is appropriate to remember Capablanca's principle: 'I always employ only those openings that bring good practical results, irrespective of the positions arising in the middlegame.' Thus Spassky felt confident in these sharp positions and was able to achieve excellent results, demonstrating the correctness of his choice.

...The year after the 'Riga catastrophe', 1959, was a very successful one for Boris. There was the 26th USSR Championship (1. Petrosian, 2-3. Spassky and Tal), the Leningrad Championship (14 out of 17), the Central Chess Club international tournament (1-3. Bronstein, Smyslov and Spassky), the best score on top board in the USSR Team Championship (ahead of Botvinnik and Tal, whom he defeated in their individual game) and a share of first place in the semi-final of the 27th USSR Championship (11½ out of 15).

And then, at the close of the year, triumph in the December international tournament in Riga (11½ out of 13!). Again he defeated Tal (who not long before had won the Candidates tournament) and crushed Mikenas, who finished only half a point behind, in his best style.

Game 51

B.Spassky-V.Mikenas

Riga 1959

Albin Counter-Gambit D08

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5!?

I think that the highly experienced Mikenas, who had battled with Alekhine back in the 1930s, was hoping to use this rare, little-studied gambit to put the young and ambitious grandmaster in the unaccustomed role of defender.

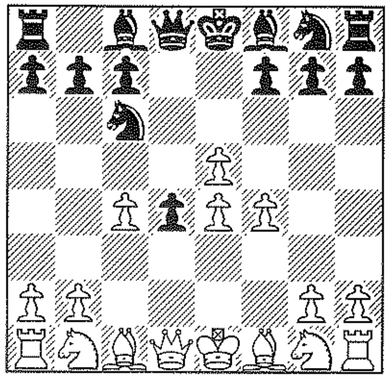
3 dxe5 d4

Black has free development and some initiative for the pawn, and White is supposed to make unpretentious moves such as 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 and then 5 g3, 5 ♗f4 or 5 a3 ♗g4 (Mikenas used to prefer 5...♗e6) 6 ♘bd2 ♕e7 7 h3! (7 g3 ♘xe5 8 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 9 h3 ♗h5 10 ♗g2 0-0-0 with equality... 0-1 Niemela-Spassky, Riga 1959) 7...♗xf3 (7...♗h5!?) 8 ♘xf3 0-0-0 9 ♕d3 h6 10 g3 g6 11 ♗g2 ♗g7 12 0-0 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 b4 f5 15 c5... 1-0 (Lasker-Alekhine, St Petersburg 1914).

4 e4!?

But that's not what happened! 'An eye for an eye – cf. Black's 2nd move.' (Spassky)

4...♘c6 5 f4



An unusual psychological duel: who will be attacking whom?! White does not want to concede the initiative even for a short time. Of course, by seizing space he creates problems for himself with its defence (the dark squares have been weakened and the opponent has acquired a passed d-pawn), but on the other hand now the play is open – almost like in the King's Gambit.

5...g5?!

A well-known, tempting move, but one that is strategically risky and not the most successful. The correct move is 5...f6! (Tarrasch-Caro, Vienna 1898) 6 ♘f3 (6 exf6 ♘xf6 7 e5?!

♗b4+ is dangerous) 6...fxe5 7 ♗d3 (or 7 a3 ♗d6 8 f5 ♘f6 9 ♗d3 a5 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗g5 a4 12 ♘bd2 ♕e8 13 ♕e1 ♕h5) 7...♗b4+ 8 ♘bd2 exf4 9 0-0 ♘f6 10 ♘b3 0-0 11 ♗xf4 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♖xf4 13 ♕d3 with a double-edged game, but not the excessively sharp 11 c5? ♕e7 12 ♕c2 ♘d7 13 ♗b5 ♗xc5 14 ♔h1 ♗b6 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♘fxd4 ♘f6 17 ♗xf4 ♕xe4 when White is in an extremely unpleasant situation (Spassky-Lutikov, Kharkov 1963). This particular game took place at the start of that semi-final of the 31st USSR Championship, with which Spassky began his ascent to the summit.

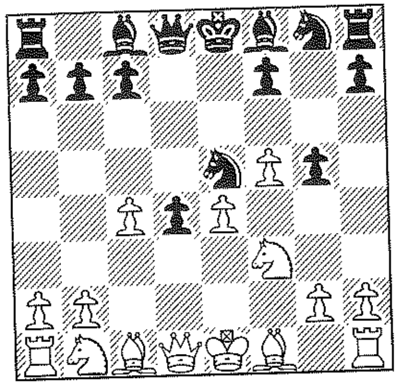
'We were then planning a distant, stage-by-stage journey towards the world championship, overcoming all barriers,' recalls grandmaster Bondarevsky, his trainer for many years. 'It was decided to adopt quiet tactics. It was assumed that he should not lose, and that five wins in the tournament would be quite sufficient to qualify for the final. The plan almost suffered a disaster on the very first day in the game with Lutikov. By energetic play the talented master gained a winning position, but he was unable to convert his advantage in the endgame.' After this draw Boris went through both the semi-final and the final undefeated, and then overcame all the remaining barriers!

Apparently from Spassky's point of view the cavalier thrusts 4 e4!? and 5 f4 did not violate these *quiet tactics*, since he had a subtle feeling for the nuances of this fighting variation. However, in his first match with Petrosian (1966) such impulsiveness cost Boris dearly, and in order to surmount this last, most difficult barrier he had to carry out additional work on the harmonisation of his style.

6 f5!

In the old days they played unpretentiously – 6 ♗d3 gxf4 7 ♗xf4 ♘ge7 8 ♗g3 ♘g6 (Burn-Schlechter, Munich 1900), whereas a modern master unhesitatingly gives up both a pawn, and the e5-square. Mikenas wanted to hide his king on the queenside, but now this is difficult on account of the c8-bishop being restricted. Now, with his king in the centre and yawning 'holes' on the kingside, Black must defend with extreme care.

6...♘xe5 7 ♘f3



7...♗b4+

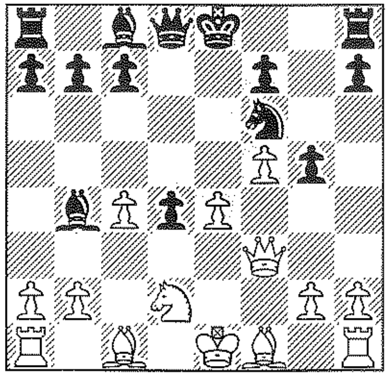
Another move order – 7...♘xf3+!? 8 ♕xf3 ♗b4+ (8...♗d6 9 ♗d3 ♕e7 is also acceptable) allows the hardly straightforward 9 ♔d1 ♗d7 10 ♗d3 ♕e7 11 h4 g4 12 ♕g3 h5? 13 ♗f4 0-0-0 14 a3 ♗a5 15 b4 ♘f6 16 e5! ♗a4+ 17 ♔c1... 1-0 (Petrosian-Mukhitdinov, 8th matchgame, Tashkent 1951). True, 12...♗d6 13 ♗f4 ♗xf4 14 ♕xf4 0-0-0 15 ♘d2 ♗c6 16 ♔c2 h5 17 ♖ae1 ♘f6 18 e5 ♘d7, as well as a move earlier 11...gxh4!? 12 ♕g4 ♘f6 13 ♕xh4 ♗d6 14 ♗g5 ♗e5 promise roughly equal chances.

8 ♘bd2

'A questionable moment. The aim of the bishop check was to deprive the white knight of the d2-square, in order to exclude it from the battle for e5, for example: 8 ♗d2 ♘xf3+ 9 ♕xf3 ♗d6 with equality. However, 8 ♔f2 was stronger, and if 8...♘g4+ 9 ♔g1 ♗c5, then 10 b4! with advantage.' (Spassky) Therefore the correct path is 8...♘xf3! 9 ♕xf3 ♗d6 or 9 ♕a4+ c6 10 ♕xb4 ♘e5 11 ♕c5 ♕f6! with equality.

8...♘c6?

Mikenas follows a familiar path, although wasting a tempo in such a position is an impermissible luxury. It was safer to play 8...♘xf3+ (reducing the threat of the e4-e5 breakthrough) 9 ♕xf3 ♘f6! (if 9...♘e7, then 10 a3 ♗d6 11 c5! and ♘b3 is unpleasant).



Analysis diagram

In the event of 10 a3 ♗d6 11 c5 (11 ♘b3 g4 12 ♕d3 ♕e7!) 11...♗xc5 12 ♘b3 ♗d6 13 ♗xg5 ♖g8 14 ♗h4 ♗e5 15 0-0-0 ♕d6 or 10 ♗e2 ♕e7 11 0-0 g4 12 ♕d3 ♗d6 13 ♘b3 c5 14 ♗g5 ♖g8 15 ♗h4 ♗d7 White has no advantage. It is more active to play 10 ♗d3! ♘d7! 11 0-0 ♘e5 (11...♗d6 12 c5!?) 12 ♕g3 f6 13 ♘b3 ♗e7 14 ♗e2 c5 15 ♗h5+ ♔d7 16 ♘d2 ♔c7 17 b4 with some initiative, although Black's defences in the centre are solid (control of the e5-square!), whereas the attacking front on the flanks is very restricted.

9 ♗d3!

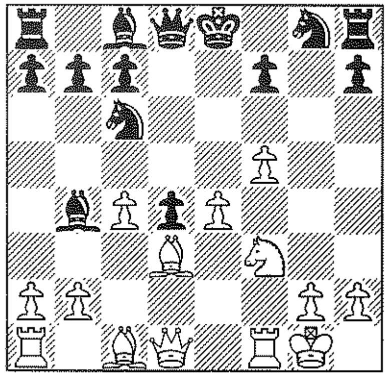
A surprise! The game A.Geller-Mikenas from a quarter-final of the 20th USSR Championship (Riga 1951) went 9 a3 ♗d6, and after 10 c5! ♗xc5 11 ♗b5 ♗d7 12 ♘b3 ♕e7 13 ♗xg5 f6 14 ♕c2 ♗b6 15 ♗f4 0-0-0 16 0-0-0 a6 17 ♗d3 White could have turned out to have the better chances. Mikenas was probably intending to improve Black's play with 9...♗xd2+ 10 ♗xd2 g4! 11 ♘g1 ♕e7!, but he did not have time. Incidentally, the aforementioned game was played in full view of the young Spassky and his trainer Zak, who both participated in that tournament.

9...g4

If White now retreats his knight, his attack will come to a standstill. But Mikenas would appear to have forgotten that a great master of attack was sitting opposite him. Or else he simply did not know about a game played by his opponent in this variation four years earlier (which would not be surprising in that 'prehistoric' era of chess bulletins and magazines).

10 0-0! (in the spirit of the Muzio Gambit)

10...gxf3 11 ♘xf3



Of course, White has an excellent game, but he has given up a piece, and in contrast to the King's Gambit the situation is not altogether clear: for the moment there are no open lines or obvious targets to attack. On the other hand, there is solid positional compensation, associated with his growing lead in development (it is not easy for Black to bring his pieces into play) and his mobile pawn pair: the breakthrough e4-e5!

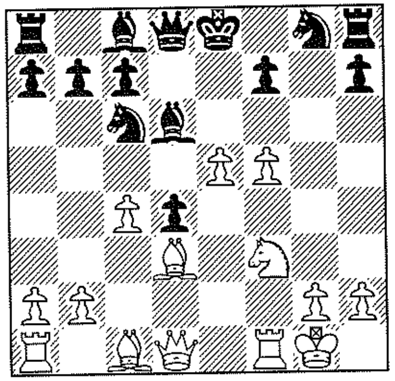
The battle for control of the e5-outpost is the *leitmotif* of the entire game, and White is prepared to make great material sacrifices for the sake of domination of this key square.

11...♗d6

Only this move is new, but it is hardly an improvement. The little-known game Spassky-B.Belyavsky (Leningrad 1955) went 11...♕e7 12 e5! a5 13 a3 ♗c5 14 b4!? axb4 15 ♗g5 f6? 16 exf6 ♕f7 17 axb4 ♖xa1 18 ♕xa1 ♗xb4 19 ♕a8 ♔d8 20 ♗e4! ♕xc4 21 ♘e5! with crushing threats, although after 15...♕d7! 16 e6 White 'only' has a dangerous initiative.

11...f6!? is more interesting. It would now be pointless to play both 12 ♗f4 ♗d6 13 e5 fxe5 14 ♖e1 ♘f6! and 12 e5 fxe5 13 a3 ♗d6 14 ♖e1 ♕f6 15 b4 a6!? (avoiding 15...♗xf5 16 c5 ♗e7 17 b5) 16 ♗g5 ♕g7 etc. 'I was intending to play 12 a3! ♗d6 13 b4 with the possible sequel 13...♘e5 14 c5 ♘xf3+ 15 ♖xf3 ♗e5 16 ♗c4 followed by ♖d3 and ♗b2 with the aim of opening the d-file or in some cases ♖h3. Generally speaking, in practice White has good chances for the sacrificed piece.' (Spassky) But in my opinion, it is better to play 15 gxf3! ♗f8 16 ♗c4, when it is hard for Black to coordinate his forces in order to parry the impending storm.

12 e5!



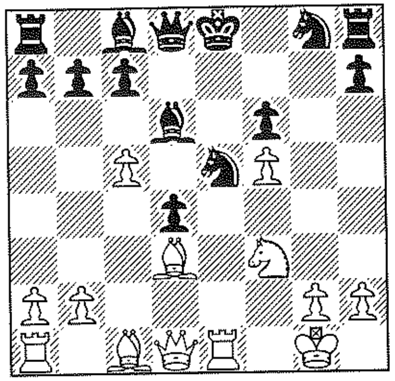
12...♘xe5?!

Better chances of resisting were offered by 12...♗xe5 13 ♘xe5!? (Spassky gives only 13 ♖e1 f6 14 b4 or immediately 13 b4) 13...♘xe5 14 ♖e1 f6 15 ♗f4 ♕e7! (15...♕d6 16 ♖xe5+! fxe5 17 ♕e1! and ♗xe5, winning) 16 ♕h5+ ♔d8!? (16...♕f7 17 ♕h4! ♕e7 18 ♕g3! ♔f8 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♖xe5 ♕f6 21 ♖f1! with a decisive attack: 21...♗d7 22 ♖e6! ♕g7 23 ♕xc7 ♗xe6 24 fxe6+ ♘f6 25 ♕d6+ ♔g8 26 e7) 17 ♕h4 (threatening 18 ♖xe5 fxe5 19 ♗g5) 17...h6, although here too White has powerful compensation for the piece after 18 c5.

13 ♖e1 f6

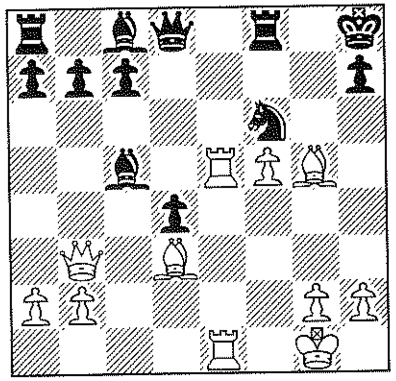
After 13...♕e7 14 ♗f4! (to Spassky's variation 14 c5 ♘xf3+ 15 gxf3 ♗e5 16 f4 there is the reply 16...♕h4! 17 fxe5 ♘e7 18 e6 fxe6 19 fxe6 b6 20 ♗e4 c6 21 ♗d2 ♗b7 22 ♕b3 0-0-0 with equality) 14...f6 15 c5! ♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 ♗e5 17 ♕g3! ♔f8 18 ♖xe5! fxe5 19 ♗xe5 ♘f6 20 ♖e1! ♖g8 21 ♕h4 Black cannot hold out. Mikenas tries to set up a defensive rampart on the e-file, clearly underestimating the opponent's murderous reply.

14 c5!



14...♗e7 (14...♗xc5? 15 ♘xe5 fxe5 16 ♖xe5+ ♗e7 17 ♕h5+ ♔d7 18 ♖d5+ ♗d6 19 ♗b5+ c6 20 ♗f4 and wins) **15 ♘xe5 fxe5 16 ♖xe5 ♘f6 17 ♗g5 0-0 18 ♕b3+ ♔h8** (if 18...♔g7 19 ♖ae1 ♖e8 the simplest is 20 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 21 ♕d1! and ♕h5) **19 ♖ae1 ♗xc5**

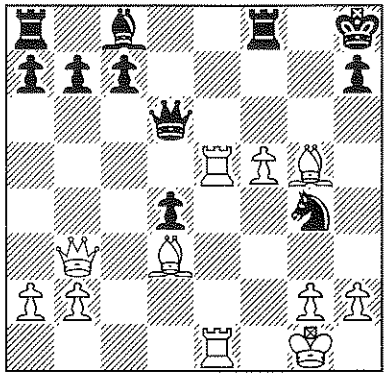
Black is obliged to return the piece.



20 ♖xc5!

'After the tempting 20 ♖e8?! ♕d6 21 ♕f7 Black has the defence 21...♘g8!' (Spassky) For example: 22 ♖xf8 (22 ♕h5? ♗xf5) 22...♕xf8 23 ♕xf8 (also unclear is 23 ♕xc7 ♕g7 24 ♕xc5 ♕xg5, but not 23...♗d6? 24 ♕c4! ♕g7 25 ♖e8!) 23...♗xf8 24 ♖e8 ♔g7 25 f6+ ♘xf6 26 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 27 ♖xf8+ and White's advantage is by no means so great as in the game.

20...♕d6 21 ♖ce5 ♘g4



22 ♗f4! ♗d7 23 ♗g3 ♗c6? (a blunder, but 23...♕b6 would also not have changed the result of the game: 24 ♕xb6 axb6 25 ♖d5 or immediately 24 ♖d5) **24 ♖5e4 1-0**

This game reveals Spassky's creative credo: the objective evaluation of the position concerned him less that the character of the resulting play. If this character suited him, he felt like a fish in water and, as a rule, was able to outplay his opponents. That was also the case here: even such a battled-hardened fighter as Mikenas, who in addition was in excellent form, could do nothing to counter Spassky's powerful assault, effectively creating a miniature.

And there were a number of such miniatures. Perhaps the most famous of his victories in the King's Gambit (along with his win over Fischer, where there was nevertheless more psychology than actual chess) is the one over Bronstein in the 27th USSR Championship (Leningrad 1960). This game, played not long before the finish, was judged the most brilliant in the tournament.

Both players were performing indifferently, somewhere in the middle of the tournament table. Boris Vasilievich told me that he was no longer following the tournament results and so, when accidentally meeting Bronstein before the game, he enquired: 'David Ionovich, how many points have you got?' It turned out that they were level, and this innocent question suddenly created a certain psychological tension around the game...

Game 52
B.Spassky-D.Bronstein
27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 16th round
King's Gambit C36

1 e4 e5

Later, annotating this game in his book *200 Open Games* (which, by the way, was one of my first and favourite chess books), Bronstein sorrowfully exclaimed: 'What the devil possessed me to reply 1...e5?? I completely forgot that Spassky, like Spielmann in the past, very much likes to play the King's Gambit.'

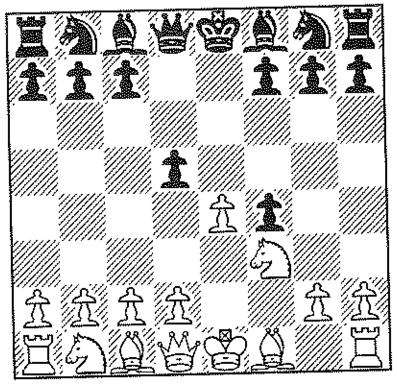
2 f4!

Of course, Spassky did not hesitate here: it was impossible not to play this against Bronstein! The resulting positions were extremely unpleasant for the 'Black' Bronstein, irrespective of the absolute value of the gambit and the objective evaluation of the position. After all, 'cunning Devik' would now have to defend, rather than attack, and he must have been constantly bothered by the thought: 'Suppose the opponent should create a masterpiece?' Amusingly, that is in fact exactly what happened.

2...exf4 3 ♘f3 d5

The 14th round game Spassky-Liberzon went 3...♗e7 4 ♘c3 ♘f6 5 d4 d5 6 exd5 ♘xd5 7 ♗c4 ♗e6 8 ♕e2 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♗xc4 10 ♕xc4 ♗d6 with equality. Later Boris Vasilievich tried, not without success, to improve White's play: 6 ♗d3!? dxe4 7 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 8 ♗xe4 ♗d6 9 0-0 (Spassky-Najdorf, Varna Olympiad 1962), or 5 e5!? ♘g4 6 d4 ♘e3 (6...♗h4+ 7 ♔e2!) 7 ♗xe3 fxe3 8 ♗c4!

(Spassky-Kholmov, Moscow 1964), in both cases with a slight initiative, but one that is not without venom.



4 exd5 ♗d6

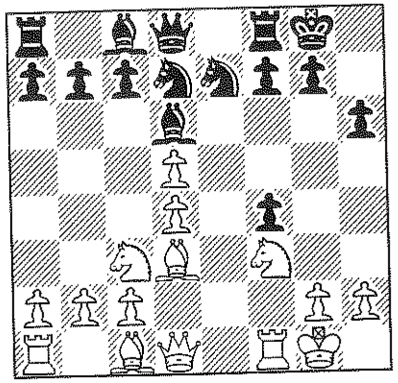
With the intention of ...♘e7. According to Bronstein, he remembered this ancient idea of Anderssen's at the board. The 8th round game Spassky-Sakharov went 4...♘f6 5 ♗b5+ c6 6 dxc6 bxc6 (6...♘xc6!? 7 d4 ♗d6 Hartston-Spassky, Hastings 1965/66) 7 ♗c4 ♘d5 8 0-0 (8 ♘c3!?) 8...♗d6 9 ♘c3! (it is inferior to play 9 d4 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♘xc3! Bronstein-Botvinnik, 20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952) 9...♗e6 10 ♘e4 ♗e7 11 ♗b3 0-0 12 d4 ♘d7 13 ♕e2 g5? (13...c5!) 14 c4 ♘5b6 15 h4! h6 16 hxg5 hxg5 17 ♘fxg5! ♗xg5 18 ♗xf4 ♗f6 19 ♖ad1 ♗f5 20 ♗e5! with a pretty win.

5 ♘c3 (5 ♗b5+!?) **5...♘e7 6 d4 0-0**

6...c6 was also recommended. In any event it is easier playing White: his first target is the f4-pawn.

7 ♗d3 ♘d7 (7...♗f5 8 0-0 with a minimal plus) **8 0-0 h6?!**

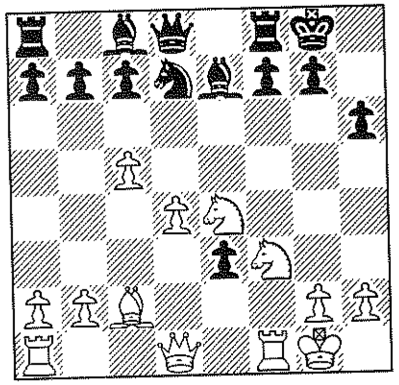
A loss of tempo. 8...♘g6 fails to equalise in view of 9 ♘e4 ♘f6 10 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 11 c4 b5 (11...♗g4 12 ♕b3 or 12 h3) 12 b3, but 8...♘f6! suggests itself: 9 ♘e5 (9 ♘g5 h6!) 9...♘fxd5 10 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 11 ♕h5! (11 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 12 ♖xf4 ♕g5 with equality) 11...g6 (11...♘f6 12 ♕g5 ♘d5 13 ♘xf7! ♕xg5 14 ♘xg5 ♗f5 15 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 16 ♘e4 with slightly the better endgame) 12 ♕h6, and here not 12...♕e7 13 ♘c4!, but, according to Spassky – 12...♕f6, and it is doubtful whether White retains any real advantage.



9 ♘e4! ♘xd5 10 c4 (beginning to build up an initiative, although, of course, there is nothing terrible as yet) **10...♘e3 11 ♗xe3 fxe3 12 c5! ♗e7**

It is dangerous to play 12...f5?! 13 cxd6 fxe4 14 ♗xe4 cxd6 15 ♕b3+ ♔h8 16 ♕xe3 ♘f6 17 ♗c2 with an attack, and 12...♗f4? 13 g3 f5 (13...♗g5? 14 ♘fxg5 and ♕h5) is totally bad on account of 14 ♘h4!

13 ♗c2!



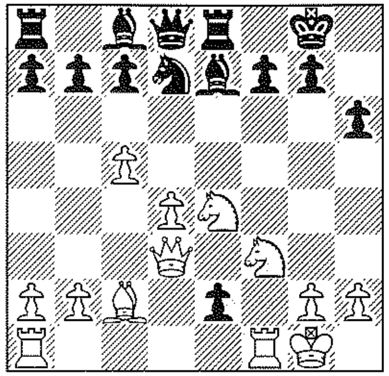
This is far more cunning than 13 ♕e2 ♘f6 14 ♕xe3 ♘d5 with an unclear game. Spassky clearly demonstrates to his opponent that he may soon have problems on h7. Objectively Black's position is still quite defensible, but here psychology came into the picture: Bronstein did not like what was happening on the board at all – there is a weakness on h7, and also one on f7...

13...♖e8

It is worse to play 13...f5?! 14 ♘c3 c6 15 ♕e2, while after 13...♘f6 14 ♕d3 ♖e8!? (Burgess; 14...♘xe4 15 ♕xe4 g6(f5) 16 ♕xe3 favours White) 15 ♖ae1! ♘d5 the same motif arises as in the game: 16 ♘d6!? (16 ♘c3 is quieter) 16...♗xd6 17 ♕h7+ ♔f8 18 cxd6 with an attack.

14 ♕d3 e2

An attempt to divert White from his plan. It was also possible to play 14...♘f8 15 ♘e5 ♗e6 (but not 15...f6? on account of a highly spectacular finish: 16 ♘g5!! hxg5 17 ♕h7+! ♘xh7 18 ♗b3+ and ♘g6 mate) 16 ♕xe3 f6 17 ♘f3 c6 18 ♗b3 – White stands slightly better, but there is still all to play for.



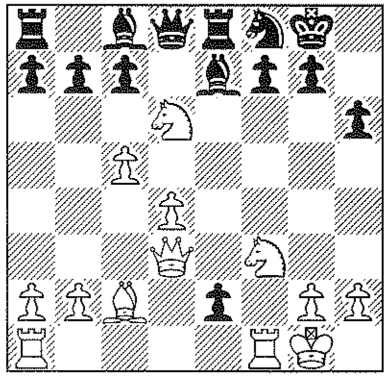
15 ♘d6!?

It begins! After the natural 15 ♖f2! (15 ♕xe2!?) 15...♘f8 16 ♖xe2 ♗e6 17 ♖ae1 White has the initiative, but Black has considerable defensive possibilities. Perhaps in this case too he would have lost the game, but then we would not now be annotating it... Spassky's sudden, thunderous stroke sharply changes the situation. Again psychology played a decisive role in his decision: in a game with Petrosian or Korchnoi he would probably not even have considered 15 ♘d6!? But against Bronstein he could not deny himself the pleasure of landing such a blow. And this move, a second-rate one from the standpoint of chess truth and clearly weaker than 15 ♖f2!, led to a swift and brilliant win – simply because it threw his opponent into confusion! It was this effect that Spassky was counting on.

15...♘f8?

Panic! Or perhaps also a feeling of contradiction: he sacrifices, but I don't take it! After the calm 15...♗xd6 16 ♕h7+ ♔f8 17 cxd6 exf1♕+ 18 ♖xf1 cxd6! (not 18...♘f6? 19 ♕h8+ ♘g8 20 ♘e5 ♖xe5 21 ♗h7! or 20...f6 21 ♗h7! ♗e6 22 d7! followed by ♗xg8 and ♖xf6+!) 19 ♕h8+ ♔e7 20 ♖e1+ ♘e5 21 ♕xg7 ♖g8! 22 ♕xh6 ♕b6! 23 ♔h1 ♗e6 24 dxe5 White would have gained good compensation for the exchange, but the position would have remained completely unclear.

Paradoxically, 15...♘f8? finally ruins Black's game: those nightmares that Bronstein experienced after 2 f4! begin to occur in his daydreams. Psychology gives way to concrete calculation.



16 ♘xf7! (an unusual variation on the tragedy of the f7-square) **16...exf1♕+ 17 ♖xf1 ♗f5**

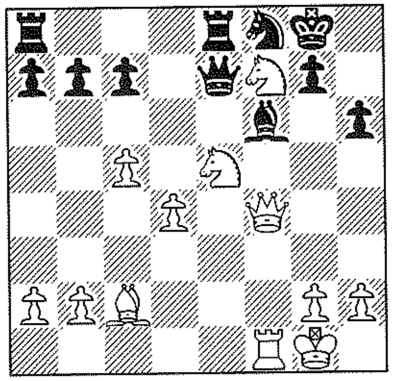
Black is a rook up and has many pieces around his king, but he is unable to defend against White's domination of the light squares: 17...♕d5!? (17...♔xf7 loses in familiar fashion: 18 ♘e5+ ♔g8 19 ♕h7+! ♘xh7 20 ♗b3+ and ♘g6 mate) 18 ♗b3! (not 18 ♘3e5? ♗xc5! 19 ♘xh6+ gxh6 20 ♗b3 ♖xe5! 21 ♕g3+ ♔h7 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd4+ 23 ♔h1 ♗e6 24 ♕d3+ ♔g8) 18...♕xf7 (18...♕h5 19 ♘xh6+) 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕c4+ ♔g6 21 ♕g8! ♗f6 (or 21...♗e6 22 ♘e5+ ♔h5 23 ♕xg7, mating) 22 ♘h4+! ♗xh4 (22...♔g5 23 ♕d5+ ♔xh4 24 g3+ and mate in two moves) 23 ♕f7+ ♔h7 24 ♕xe8 and wins.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Spassky would have found this series of accurate moves: he was always successful in pursuing the enemy king.

18 ♕xf5 ♕d7 19 ♕f4 ♗f6 20 ♘3e5 (20 ♘xh6+ gxh6 21 ♕xf6 was also good) **20...♕e7**

Slightly better practical chances were offered by 20...♗xe5 21 ♘xe5 ♕e7 22 ♕e4 g6 23 ♖xf8+!? (23 ♗b3+! ♔h8 24 ♕d5 ♕g7 25 ♖f7 is simpler) 23...♕xf8 24 ♕xg6+ ♕g7 25 ♗b3+ ♔h8 26 ♘f7+ ♔g8 27 ♘d8+ ♔f8 28 ♕f5+ ♔e7 29 ♘e6 ♕h8 30 ♕e4 (or 30 ♕f4 ♖ad8 31 ♕xc7+ ♖d7 32 ♕g3) 30...c6 31 ♘g5+! with the same outcome.

It is most likely that at this moment Bronstein was no longer thinking about the result of the game: he was completely at the mercy of the combinative hurricane.



21 ♗b3! (immediately decisive) **21...♗xe5** (21...♘e6 22 ♘xh6+; 21...♔h7 22 ♕f5+) **22 ♘xe5+ ♔h7** (22...♘e6 23 ♘g6 and ♕e4) **23 ♕e4+ 1-0**

A crushing game and, for all its psychological ingredient, it was not some 'boy off the street' whom Spassky defeated, but the great Bronstein! Not without reason, Fischer remembered this masterpiece and his own defeat in the King's Gambit, when he included Spassky in 'The ten greatest masters in history.' He mentioned the 'dynamic, individual style' and the 'super-sharp openings' of the Russian player, forecast a great future for him and shared a very interesting observation: 'Spassky sacrifices with complete abandon... He sits at the board with the same expression whether he's mating or being mated. He can blunder away a piece, and you are never sure whether it's a blunder or a fantastically deep sacrifice.'

We will now analyse not a gambit, but an equally bold piece of play with the voluntarily loss of castling – one of the most tragic games (along with *Game No.50*) in Spassky's career. After nine rounds of the Zonal, 28th USSR Championship (Moscow, February 1961) he was confidently leading the race (7 out of 9!) and appeared to have every chance of at last becoming national champion, or at least of qualifying for the Interzonal tournament. 'One is impressed by the courtesy of the other participants with regard to Spassky,' joked Flohr. 'They know that Boris has not been the champion, and on this occasion they want to allow him to have his turn.'

Game 53

B.Spassky-L.Polugayevsky

28th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1961, 10th round
Queen's Indian Defence E12

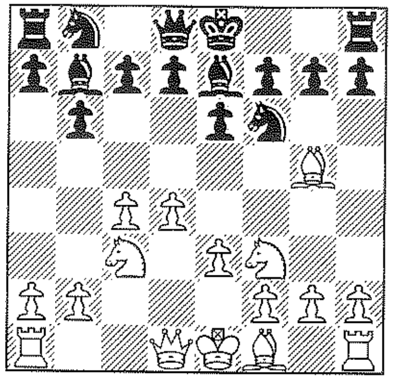
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3

There can be no doubt that Black was fully prepared for 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5 (*Game No.48*).

3...b6 4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 ♗g5 ♗e7

In the 29th USSR Championship (Baku 1961) Polugayevsky replied 5...♗b4 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 g5 8 ♗g3 ♘e4 9 ♕c2 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 d6, but after 11 ♗d3 ♘xg3 (11...f5 12 d5! Spassky-Gonzales, Havana 1962) 12 fxg3!? g4 13 ♘h4 ♕g5 14 0-0! ♕xe3+ 15 ♔h1 ♘d7 16 ♖f4 ♖g8 17 ♖af1 Spassky gained good compensation for the pawn and won in a complicated struggle. Usually his opponents began with the useful inclusion 5...h6!, which is what Polugayevsky used to play, only... not in this game.

6 e3



6...♘e4

Polugayevsky's choice of this comparatively rare, simplifying variation was no doubt dictated by strictly psychological considerations – a desire to surprise his formidable opponent and to dispel his fighting mood. 6...0-0 7 ♗d3 c5 8 0-0 h6! is also quite acceptable, but not 8...♘c6? 9 d5! ♘b4 10 d6! ♗xd6 11 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 12 ♕xd6 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♘e8!? (Spassky-Larsen, 3rd round, 'Match of the Century', Belgrade 1970) 14 ♕xf8! ♕xg5+ 15 ♔h1 ♕h5 16 ♖g1 ♕xf3+ 17 ♖g2, when Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange (Bondarevsky).

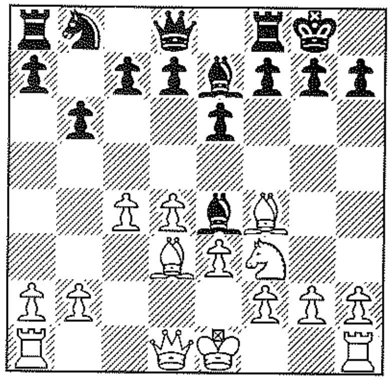
7 ♘xe4

The game Spassky-Lutikov (27th USSR Championship, Leningrad 1960) varied with 7 ♗f4 ♗b4 8 ♕c2 0-0 9 ♗d3 f5 10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 d6, when White's play reached a positional impasse (12 ♕b3 c5!) and he risked a speculative pawn sacrifice: 12 c5?! ♕e7 13 cxd6 cxd6 14 ♘d2 ♘xd2 15 ♕xd2 e5 with a lively game. I think that a modern grandmaster with his improved defensive technique would have replied 12...bxc5, since it is not easy to find full compensation after 13 ♕b3 ♕c8 14 ♖ab1 ♗a6 15 c4 ♘d7.

7...♗xe4 8 ♗f4

The exchange 8 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 usually signifies the start of peace negotiations, but there are also exceptions: 9 ♘d2 ♗b7 10 ♗e2 ♕g5 11 ♗f3 ♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♘c6 13 ♕g3 ♕xg3 14 hxg3 ♔e7 15 g4 h6 16 a3 a6! 17 ♔e2 ♖hb8 18 ♘e4 b5 19 c5 d5! 20 cxd6+ cxd6 21 f4 ♖c8 22 f5 ♘a5 23 ♔d3?! ♘c4 24 ♖ab1? d5 25 ♘c3 (25 ♘c5 e5!) 25...♖c6 26 fxe6 fxe6 27 g5 hxg5 28 ♖h5 ♔f6 29 ♖h3 ♖ac8 30 ♘a2 a5! 31 ♖f3+ ♔g6 32 g4 ♘d6!? (32...e5) 33 ♘c3 b4 34 axb4 axb4 35 ♘d1 ♖c2 36 ♖f2 b3! 37 ♖a1 ♘e4 38 ♖e2 ♖8c6 39 ♖b1 e5 40 ♖a1 ♖6c4 41 ♖a5 ♘c5+! 0-1 (Bogoljubow-Capablanca, Bad Kissingen 1928).

8...0-0 9 ♗d3!



'This move gives the game an unusual direction. It would appear to be advantageous for Black to prevent his opponent from castling. However, for Polugayevsky this outwardly favourable factor played a psychologically damaging role: he began to believe in the possibility of developing his initiative, forgetting about the defects of his own position.' (Aronin)

9...♗b4+?!

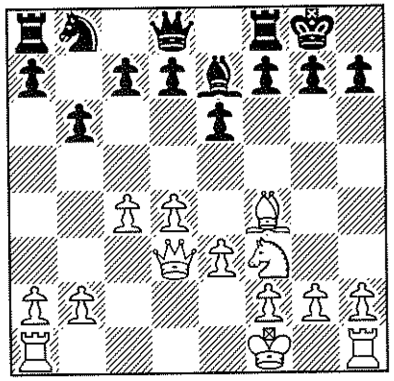
A dubious bishop sortie: after all, this is not a King's Gambit, where a couple of lost tempi are a small price to pay for the chance of keeping the enemy king in the centre. After the 'normal' 9...♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 or 9...f5!? 10 ♗xe4 fxe4 11 ♘d2 d5 12 ♕g4 ♖f6 13 0-0 ♘c6 with equality (Szabo-Miles, Amsterdam 1976) events would have developed much more slowly – in the spirit of the chosen opening line. Now, however, a real conflict arises and the drowsy troops receive the order to prepare for battle!

10 ♔f1!

Leaving the d1-h5 route open for the queen. 'An excellent alternative is 10 ♔e2 ♗xf3+!? 11 gxf3,' we read in the book *Grand Strategy: 60 Games by Boris Spassky*. However, the g-file alone is not enough for the success of the attack, and after 11...♗d6 12 ♗xd6 cxd6 followed by ...f7-f5 and ...♘c6 Black has no particular problems. Incidentally, this is also the case after 11 ♔xf3 f5 12 h4 ♗d6 13 ♗xd6 cxd6 14 g3 ♘c6 15 ♔g2 e5 16 d5 ♘b4! 17 ♗e2 a5 and ...♘a6-c5.

10...♗xd3+ 11 ♕xd3 ♗e7

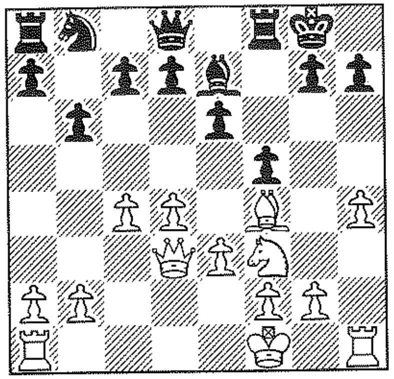
The bishop is obliged to beat a retreat, in order to parry the threats of c4-c5 and ♘g5, but the following aggressive thrust forces Polugayevsky to devise a defensive plan in conditions of sudden turmoil.



12 h4! f5

Black blocks the white queen's diagonal and also deprives it of the e4-square, but in so doing he weakens his king's defences by creating the grounds for g2-g4. The seemingly solid 12...d5 is met strongly by 13 ♘g5! g6 (if 13...♗xg5? 14 hxg5 g6, then, if there is nothing better, 15 cxd5 ♕xd5 16 e4 or 15...exd5 16 ♖c1) 14 ♘f3! with the threat of h4-h5.

The alternative is 12...♘c6, for example: 13 ♖c1 f5 14 a3 ♗f6 15 b4 d6 16 ♗g3 ♕e8 (Korchnoi-F.Olafsson, Iceland rapidplay 2000). A more energetic alternative is 13 d5! ♘b4 14 ♕d2 c5 15 a3 ♘a6 16 h5, and White's chances are somewhat better.



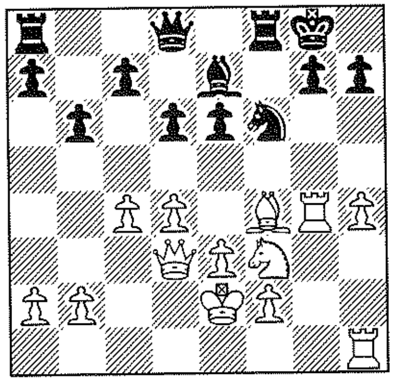
13 ♔e2!?

Chess is a mysterious game! White makes a second move with his king – and his initiative merely increases, since now the way is open for the queen's rook to go to g1.

13...d6 14 g4! (the start of a direct assault) **14...♘d7** (14...fxg4? is bad due to 15 ♘g5 ♗xg5 16 hxg5 g6 17 ♕e4!) **15 ♖ag1 fxg4?!**

The first indication of slight panic: Black helps the opponent to develop his forces. Perhaps he should have preferred 15...♕e8, taking control of the h5- and g6-squares, vacating d8 for his rook and contemplating a counterattack with ...e6-e5. After 16 gxf5 ♖xf5 (from here it is not easy to dislodge the rook) or 16 h5 ♔h8 things are more difficult for White.

16 ♖xg4 ♘f6



17 ♖g5!

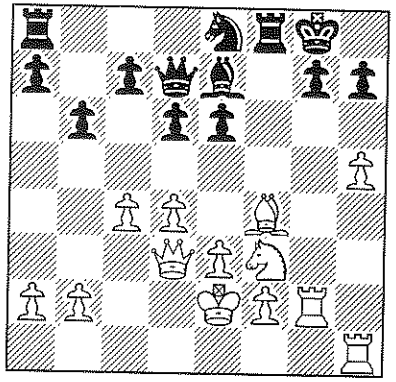
A far from trivial decision: the rook takes control of the fifth rank and expedites the advance of the h-pawn. After 17 ♖g2 ♘h5 Black would have had time to erect a first defensive rampart: 18 ♗h6 ♖f6 19 ♗g5 ♖f7 20 ♕e4 ♕c8 or 18 ♘g5 ♗xg5 (but not 18...♘xf4+? 19 exf4 ♗xg5 20 hxg5 g6 21 ♕e4 ♕d7 22 ♖gh2 ♖ae8 23 ♕xg6+!!) 19 hxg5 g6, and 20 ♖xh5 gxh5 21 g6 is not dangerous in view of 21...♕f6! etc.

17...♕d7

It would appear that 17...♕e8?! is again possible, with the idea of 18 h5 (18 ♖hg1 ♘h5!) 18...♖d8, but then 19 h6 g6 20 ♘h4! is strong, with an inevitable combinative explosion after 20...♔h8 (20...♘h5? 21 ♖xh5!; 20...e5 21 ♘xg6!) 21 ♖xg6!! e5 22 ♖g7! exf4 (22...♖f7? 23 ♕xh7+!! ♘xh7 24 ♘g6 mate) 23 ♘f3!, for example: 23...♖d7 24 ♘g5 ♗d8 25 ♘xh7! ♖xg7 26 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 27 hxg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♕h7+ ♔f8 29 ♖g1 ♕f7 30 ♕h8+ ♔e7 31 ♖g7 or 23...♖g8(f7) 24 ♘g5 ♖xg7 25 hxg7+ ♔xg7 26 ♖xh7+! ♘xh7 27 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 28 ♘e4+ ♔e6 29 d5+ ♔e5 30 ♔f3 and the black king perishes in the middle of the board.

18 h5 ♘e8 19 ♖g2

How to guess where to retreat the rook? Just in case, Spassky leaves the path open for the bishop at f4, whereas 19 ♖g3!? would have relieved the king of the need to defend the knight at f3.



19...b5?

A nervy attempt to divert the opponent's attention from the attack on the king. I think that after 19...♖d8?! Black was not concerned about 20 h6 (there is no need to hurry with this move) 20...g6 21 ♖xg6+?! (21 ♖hg1 ♗f6; 21 d5 exd5 22 cxd5 c5! with equality) 21...hxg6 22 h7+ ♔h8 23 ♗e5+ ♘g7! or 22 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 23 ♗e5+ ♗f6!, but instead 20 ♖hg1! (threatening ♗h6) 20...♗f6 (20...♔h8? 21 h6! g6 22 ♖xg6 hxg6 23 ♗e5+!! ♗f6 24 ♘h4 with a terrible attack) 21 ♘g5 ♗xg5 22 ♗xg5 (and ♗h6!). But the cool 19...♖b8(c8) 20 ♖hg1 ♗f6 would still have maintained a defensible position.

20 c5!?

Not wishing to open a second front – 20 cxb5 ♖b8 21 a4, although after 21...a6 (21...c6? 22 h6 g6 23 ♘e5! dxe5 24 ♗xe5 with the double threat of ♗xb8 and ♖xg6+!) 22 ♖hg1! Black would be unable to regain his pawn immediately: 22...axb5? 23 h6! g6 (23...♗f6 24 hxg7 ♗xg7 25 a5!) 24 ♖xg6+ hxg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♗e5+! etc. It is also bad to play 22...♖f5? 23 ♗h6! or 22...♔h8? 23 h6 g6 24 ♖xg6 hxg6 25 ♗e5+!, while after 22...♗f6 23 ♘g5 ♗xg5 24 ♖xg5 h6?! (24...c6 is more tenacious) 25 ♖g6 axb5 26 a5! White has an obvious advantage.

20...dxc5?

After lengthy and agonising hesitation Polugayevsky fatally weakens the e5-square. After 20...♔h8 White would have had the choice of two unpleasant alternatives: 21 ♖hg1 (with the thematic threat of 22 h6 g6 23 ♖xg6 hxg6 24 ♗e5+!! ♗f6 25 ♘h4) 21...♗f6 22 ♘g5 ♗xg5 23 ♖xg5, as well as the spectacular 21 ♗e5!? ♗f6! (21...dxe5? 22 ♘xe5 and 23 ♘g6+!; 21...♖xf3? 22 h6!; 21...♘f6? 22 cxd6 cxd6 23 ♕g6!!) 22 ♕e4 ♖b8 23 c6 ♕e7 24 ♗f4, when Black is condemned to passive defence.

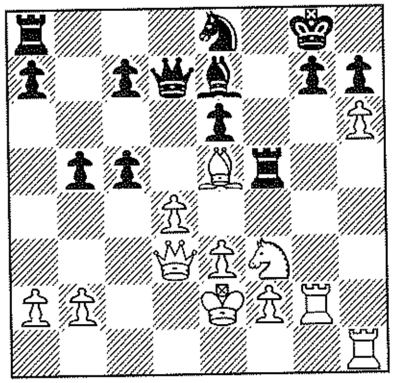
But Black could have considered 20...♕c6!? 21 ♖hg1, and now not 21...♔h8? 22 h6! (22...g6 23 ♖xg6) or 21...♕d5? 22 h6! ♖f7 (22...g6? 23 ♖xg6+! hxg6 24 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 25 ♘e5!) 23 hxg7, which is clearly advantageous to White, but 21...♖f5! 22 h6 g6 23 cxd6 cxd6, although after 24 d5! Black would still be facing a difficult struggle for a draw: 24...♖xd5 (if 24...♕xd5 White has the strong reply 25 ♘d4! ♖f8? 26 ♖xg6+! or 25...♖f6 26 ♗g5!) 25 ♖xg6+ ♔f7! 26 ♖g7+ (26 ♘d4 ♕c4 27 ♕xc4 bxc4 28 ♖xe6 ♗f6 29 ♖e4 ♖a5 with equality) 26...♘xg7 27 ♖xg7+ ♔e8 28 ♘d4 ♕c4 etc.

21 h6 ♖f5

The standard defence 21...g6? is no longer possible on account of the 'hole' at e5: 22 ♖xg6+ hxg6 23 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 24 ♘e5 ♕d5 25 ♖g1 and wins, while 21...c4? would have been refuted by the attractive 22 ♕xh7+!! ♔xh7 23 hxg7+ ♔g8 24 ♖h8+ ♔f7 25 ♘e5+ ♔f6 26 ♖xf8+! ♗xf8 27 gxf8♕+ ♕f7 28 ♕xf7 mate. The move in the game allows Black to hold on slightly on the edge of the abyss.

22 ♗e5!

With such a powerful bishop, White's attack is irresistible. In searching for replies that are at least partly acceptable, Black ends up in very severe time-trouble.



22...c4 23 ♕e4 ♕d5 24 ♕g4

There was also another, prosaic way to win – 24 ♕xd5!? exd5 25 hxg7 etc.

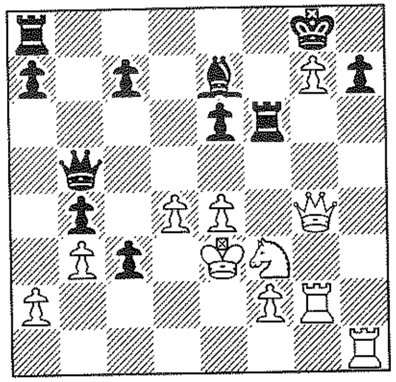
24...c3 25 b3! b4

This pawn pair would be good in an ending, but the fact that Black might survive to reach an endgame could be imagined only in a nightmare!

26 e4!?

White again disdains the prosaic – 26 ♗xg7! ♕xf3+ (26...♕b5+ 27 ♔e1 ♗g5 28 ♘xg5 ♕d3 29 ♕d1) 27 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 28 ♔xf3 etc. He is attracted by the idea of a king march.

26...♕b5+ 27 ♔e3! ♖f7 28 hxg7 ♘f6 29 ♗xf6 (again there was a dual winning solution: 29 ♕h3 c2 30 ♗xf6 c1♕+ 31 ♖xc1 ♖xf6 32 e5 etc.) **29...♖xf6**



30 ♖xh7!?

Capablanca, Karpov and a computer would 'automatically' have played 30 e5! ♖g6 31 ♕h5 and wins. But Spassky rejects this 'boring' continuation and begins the concluding, pretty stage of the attack. At this point the flag on Black's clock was already hanging, whereas White still had roughly 15 minutes left.

30...♖xf3+ (this series of checks is the only way of deferring resignation) **31 ♔xf3** (31 ♕xf3?? ♗g5+ would occur only in a blitz game) **31...♕d3+ 32 ♔f4**

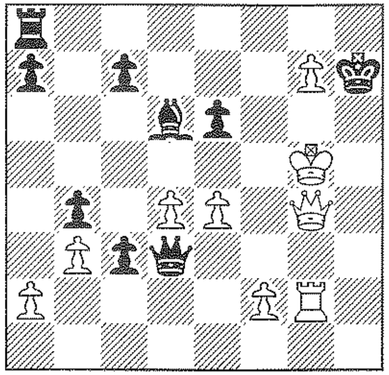
Had White placed his rook at g3 back on the 19th move, the simple 32 ♔g2 would now have been decisive. However, as it is Black is in a desperate position.

32...♗d6+

After 32...♕d2+ the fairy-tale 33 ♔e5! would have worked: 32...♗d6+ 34 ♔xe6 ♖e8+ 35 ♔d7! ♖e7+ 36 ♔d8! (Moiseev), but Polugayevsky most probably avoided the queen check on account of the more earthly 33 ♔g3 ♗d6+ 34 ♔h3 ♕d3+ 35 f3.

33 ♔g5 ♔xh7

The sensible checks have come to an end (33...♗e7+? 34 ♔g6!; 33...♕b5+? 34 ♔h6!) and all that remains is to take the rook after all. To judge by the noise in the hall, many spectators had already anticipated the logical finish.



34 ♔h5??

Had White carried out his planned 34 ♔f6!! ♕xd4+ 35 ♔f7!, this would have been one of Spassky's best wins: such bold raids by the king under a hail of bullets can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and are part of the golden treasury of chess. Alas, Spassky suddenly imagined that after 34 ♔h5 the checks were at an end. Well, erratic thinking at moments of terrible tension, especially with the opponent's flag about to fall, occurs even with great players.

34...♕b5+!

This unexpected queen jump plunged Spassky into shock, and he saw the rest as though in a mist.

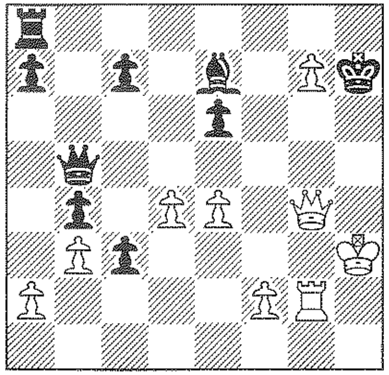
35 ♔h4?

An almost instantaneous reply – and a second successive, virtually decisive mistake! White instinctively avoided 35 e5! ♕e8+!, although Black would have had to make five moves in literally seconds after 36 ♔h4, in order not to miss the draw:

1) 36...♗e7+ 37 ♔h3 ♕f7 (or 37...♔g8 38 ♔h2! ♕f7!, but not 38...c2? 39 ♕xe6+ ♕f7 40 ♕h6 and wins) 38 ♔h2! ♔g8 39 ♕h3! ♕f4+ 40 ♔g1 (40 ♔h1? ♕h4!) 40...♕c1+ with perpetual check;

2) 36...♔g8 37 exd6 c2! 38 ♕f4 ♕c6 39 ♖g1 ♕xd6! 40 ♔g5! ♖d8 (or 40...♕xf4+ 41 ♔xf4 and ♖c1) 41 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 42 ♖c1 ♖c6 43 ♔f6 with a draw.

35...♗e7+ 36 ♔h3

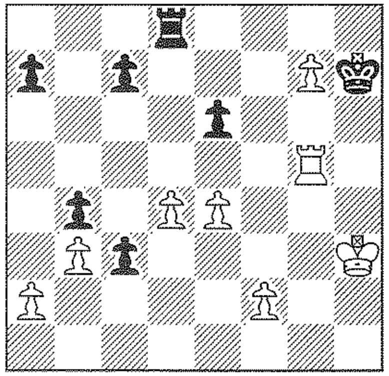


36...♕g5!!

Here we have that extreme situation in time-trouble: Black again finds the only move, after which it is now White who has to fight for a draw!

37 ♕xg5 (forced: 37 ♕xe6?? ♕h4 mate!) **37...♗xg5 38 ♖xg5 ♖d8!**

The resulting rook endgame (the irony of fate – cf. the note to Black's 25th move) is highly unpleasant for White: the g7-pawn demands constant defence and merely ties down his rook, whereas the passed c3-pawn allows the black rook to become extremely active.



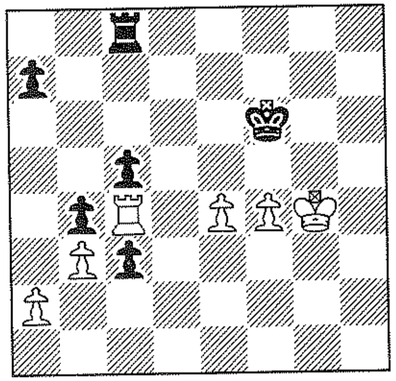
39 f4?

In such an unusual situation, commentary is appropriate only for the sake of establishing the chess truth. Remember the main rule of such endings: activity above all else! The way for White to save the game consisted in retaining and activating his central pawns, attempting with the aid of his king to make one of them as powerful as the c3-pawn. We will consider three plans:

1) 39 ♔g3 ♔g8! 40 ♖c5 ♖xd4 41 ♔f4 (pinning his hopes on the passed pawn) 41...♖d2 42 ♔e5 ♖xf2 43 ♖xc7 ♖xa2 44 ♔xe6 (44 ♔f6 ♔h7! 45 ♔xe6 a5 and wins) 44...♔h7! 45 e5 a5 46 ♔d5 ♖d2+ 47 ♔c4 (or 47 ♔e4 ♖e2+ 48 ♔d4 a4 49 bxa4 c2 50 ♔d3 b3 51 ♔xe2 b2 52 ♖xc2 b1♕) 47...♖d7 48 ♖c6 ♖b7! 49 ♔d3 a4 50 ♔c2 a3 51 ♔b1 ♖xg7 and Black wins;

2) 39 g8♕+! (less obvious) 39...♖xg8 40 ♖c5 ♖g1! 41 ♖xc7+ ♔g6 42 f3! ♖d1 43 ♖c4 a5 44 ♔g4 ♔f6 45 f4! ♖g1+ (45...♖d2(a1) 46 e5+ and f4-f5) 46 ♔f3 ♖a1 47 e5+ ♔e7 (47...♔f5? 48 ♖c8 ♖xa2?? 49 ♖g8!) 48 f5 exf5 49 d5 ♖xa2 50 ♖c7+ ♔d8 51 d6 ♖d2 52 ♔f4 a4 53 bxa4 c2 54 ♔e3! ♖d5 (54...♖h2? 55 e6) 55 ♖xc2 ♖xe5+ 56 ♔d4 ♖a5 with a draw;

3) 39 d5! (the least obvious chance of all) 39...exd5 (39...c2?! 40 ♖g1 with a draw) 40 g8♕+! ♖xg8 41 ♖xd5! ♔g6 42 ♖c5 ♔f6 43 f4 (White has retained his dangerous pawn pair, even if his king has been temporarily shut out) 43...♖e8 44 ♖c4 c5 (trapping the rook) 45 ♔g4 ♖c8, and White is soon forced to advance one of his pawns.



Analysis diagram

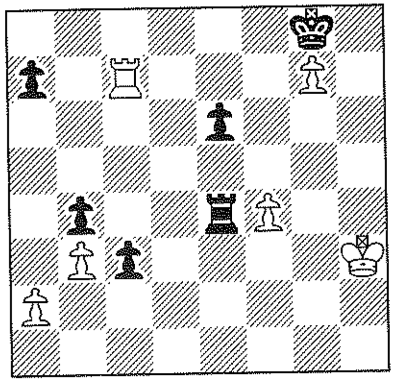
46 e5+? ♔e6 47 ♖e4 loses to 47...c4 48 bxc4 c2 49 f5+ ♔e7 50 ♖e1 ♖xc4+. On the other hand, 46 ♔f3 ♔e6 47 ♔e3 ♔d6 48 a3 a5 49 axb4 axb4 50 f5! ♔e5 (50...♖h8 51 e5+!) 51 ♔f3 ♖d8 52 ♖xc5+ ♔d4 53 ♖c4+ ♔d3 54 f6, or the immediate 46 f5! ♔e5 47 ♔f3 ♖d8 48 ♔e3 ♖c8 (48...♔d6 49 ♔f4 ♖e8 50 f6 with a draw) 49 ♔f3 ♖c6 50 ♔e3 a5 51 Kf3 ♖h6 52 ♖xc5+ ♔d6 (52...♔d4?? 53 ♖d5 mate) 53 ♖c8 leads to a draw.

39...♔g8! (this practically ensures the win, since now White has no serious counterplay) **40 ♖c5** (if 40 d5, then 40...exd5 41 exd5 ♖d7! 42 ♖e5 ♖xg7 is decisive) **40...♖xd4**

To judge by the quality of the last seven moves, one would think that it was not Black who had been in time-trouble, but White!

41 ♖xc7 ♖xe4

The sealed move; the resumption did not last long



42 ♔g4

It was equally hopeless to play 42 ♔g3 (42 ♖xa7 c2 43 ♖c7 ♖e3+! and ...♖c3) 42...a5 43 ♔f3 ♖e1 44 ♔f2 ♖a1 45 ♔e3 ♖xa2 46 ♔d4 ♖g2 47 ♔e5 ♖xg7 48 ♖c5 ♖g3 49 ♔xe6 a4 50 bxa4 b3.

42...e5! 43 a3

As was shown by home analysis, after 43 ♔f5 ♖xf4+ 44 ♔g6 ♖g4+ 45 ♔h6 e4 White would not have saved the game by either 46 ♖xa7 c2! 47 ♖c7 ♖g2 48 ♖c8+ ♔f7 49 ♖c7+ ♔f6 50 ♖c6+ ♔e5 51 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 52 g8♕ ♖h2+ 53 ♔g7 ♖g2+, or 46 ♖c8+ ♔f7 47 ♖f8+ ♔e6 48 g8♕+ ♖xg8 49 ♖xg8 in view of 49...e3!! 50 ♖e8+ ♔d5 51 ♖xe3 c2! 52 ♖e1 ♔d4 53 ♔g5 ♔c3 54 ♔f4 ♔d2 55 ♖h1 c1♕ 56 ♖xc1 ♔xc1 57 ♔e3 ♔b2 etc.

43...♖xf4+ 44 ♔g5 a5 45 ♔g6 ♖g4+ 46 ♔f6 ♔h7! 47 g8♕+ (47 ♔xe5 ♖xg7) **47...♔xg8 48 ♔xe5 ♖g1 49 ♔f6 ♖f1+ 0-1**

If 50 ♔e5 bxa3! 51 ♖c8+ ♔f7 52 ♖c7+ ♔e8 and the a-pawn queens, while after 50 ♔g6 ♔f8 51 axb4 axb4 52 ♖c4 ♔e8 53 ♔g5 ♔d8 54 ♔g4 ♖b1 the last white pawn falls.

Nowadays no one remembers it, but this undeserved defeat cost the 24-year-old Spassky far more than the title of USSR Champion. It shattered him and upset his creative mood, and Boris was simply unrecognisable at the finish: after losing to both Simagin and Korchnoi, and then to Stein in the decisive game (*Game No.57*), he again failed to qualify for the Interzonal tournament.

But now let us see how the future world champion performed one of the most complicated and risky openings – the irrational 'Anti-Moscow Gambit'

Game 54

B.Spassky-L.Pachman

Moscow 1967

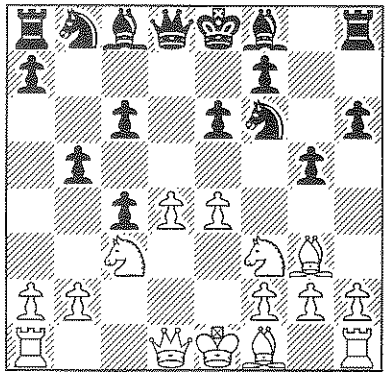
Semi-Slav Defence D43

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4!?

Spassky was virtually the first to begin playing this sharp move, whereas nowadays it is the height of fashion, since after 6 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 (the Moscow Variation) White's spatial advantage is offset by Black's two bishops and the latent dynamics of his position. This type of position has been the subject of debates since the time of the 11th game of the Capablanca-Alekhine match (*Volume 1, Game No.125*).

6...dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 ♗g3 b5

Black has avoided the risky Botvinnik Variation (5...dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♘xg5) and has remained a pawn up, apparently without any great problems.



9 ♕c2?!

This type of position differs fundamentally from those that we saw in the games with Mikenas and Bronstein. Here White's compensation for the sacrificed material is not momentary, but long-term, strategic. The moves ...b7-b5 and ...g7-g5 are encouraging for White: pawns cannot move backwards and it is not easy for Black to castle. However, very accurate and energetic play is demanded of White, whereas Spassky operates somewhat on general grounds, thereby allowing his opponent excellent counter-chances. And, despite White's ultimate success in this game, the outcome of this opening duel discouraged many players from trying 6 ♗h4 for a long time afterwards.

Only, this did not apply to Spassky himself: in his game with Kostro (Siegen Olympiad 1970) he did not miss the chance to employ the gambit again, playing 9 ♗e2! ♗b7 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 d5?! cxd5 12 exd5 ♕b6? 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 ♘d4 ♗c5 (14...a6 15 ♗h5+) 15 ♘dxb5 0-0 16 ♗f3 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♖ac8 18 ♖ad1 ♕c6 19 ♕e2 ♘d5 20 ♘d6! ♗xd6 21 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 22 ♗xd6 with a spectacular rout. Later, it is true, when a serious study was made of this scheme, a forcible rejoinder was found – 12...♘xd5! 13 ♘xb5 a6! 14 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 15 ♗xd6 ♕b6 16 ♗g3 ♖c8 17 ♖c1 c3 18 ♘e5 cxb2 19 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 20 ♕c2 0-0

(Bareev-Dreev, 3rd matchgame, Wijk aan Zee 1995), and another branch became topical instead – 11 ♕c2 ♘h5 12 a4 a6 13 ♖ad1 ♗e7 14 d5 ♘xg3 15 hxg3 etc.

Back in 1982, after 9 ♗e2! ♗b7 Timoshchenko and I found a quite different idea – 10 e5 ♘d5 11 h4!, which I tried against Tal (Moscow Interzonal 1982): 11...♕a5 12 ♖c1 g4 (12...♘a6!? 13 hxg5 0-0-0) 13 ♘d2 c5 14 ♘ce4 cxd4 15 0-0 h5?! (15...♘c6!) 16 a4! a6, and here 17 ♗xc4! (instead of 17 b4? ♕d8!) 17...bxc4 18 ♘xc4 ♕b4 19 f3!! (pointed out in analysis after the game by Petrosian – a romantic at heart!) would have given White a terrible attack: 19...♘c6 20 ♗e1 ♕e7 21 ♘cd6+ ♔d8 22 ♖xc6! ♗xc6 23 ♗a5+ ♘c7 24 ♕xd4, 19...♗h6 20 ♘ed6+ ♔d7 21 fxg4 ♗xc1 22 ♗e1! ♕c5 23 ♖xf7+ ♘e7 24 ♕xc1, or 19...♗c6 20 fxg4! ♗xa4 21 ♘cd6+ ♗xd6 22 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 23 ♖xf7+ ♘e7 24 ♖xe7+! ♔xe7 25 ♕f3 ♖f8 26 ♕e4! (not 26 ♕xa8 d3! 27 ♕a7+ ♘d7 28 ♖c4 ♕b6+) 26...♘c6 27 ♕h7+ ♔d8 28 ♕g7 ♖e8 29 ♕f7 ♖h8 (29...♘e7 30 ♗e1!) 30 ♗e1! ♕b6 31 ♗a5!! A problem-like win: both decoy – 31...♕xa5 32 ♘b7+ and diversion – 31...♘xa5 32 ♕f6+ ♔d7 33 ♕g7+.

Incidentally, the alternative 10...♘h5 seemed to me to be not altogether reliable on account of 11 ♘xg5!? ♘xg3 12 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 13 fxg3! ♔g8! (13...♘d7? 14 ♗h5+!) 14 0-0, when it is bad to play 14...♘a6? (a faulty recommendation by Anand: the knight should stand at d7, guarding the f6-square) 15 ♘e4! ♗e7 (15...♘c7 16 ♘f6+ ♔f7 17 ♗h5+ ♔e7 18 ♕g4; 15...c5 16 ♗xc4!; 15...♗g7 16 ♗h5!) 16 ♗xc4! ♖h7 17 ♗xe6+ ♔h8 18 ♗f5 ♖g7 19 ♕h5 ♗g5 20 ♘d6 and wins. Another tempting continuation is 11 a4 a6 (11...b4!? 12 ♘e4 c5 is better) 12 ♘xg5! In 1996 I showed this idea to Kramnik, and soon afterwards he employed it against Anand (Belgrade 1997) – after 12...♘xg3 13 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 14 fxg3 ♔g8 15 0-0 ♘d7 16 ♗g4 ♕e7 17 ♘e4 ♖h7 (17...c5 18 ♘d6 cxd4 19 ♖f7! or 18...♗d5 19 ♗f3! ♗g7 20 ♘f5!) 18 ♘d6 ♖b8, instead of 19 b4? White could have retained an advantage by 19 axb5! cxb5 20 ♘xb7 ♖xb7 21 ♖xa6 ♖b6 22 ♖xb6 ♘xb6 23 ♖f6.

Some St Petersburg players, led by Khalifman, have introduced 10 h4!? g4 11 ♘e5, in order to carry out Spassky's plan in an improved version after 11...h5 (11...b4!?) 12 0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♕c2. However, after 13...♘xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗g7 15 ♖ad1 0-0 the chances are roughly equal: 16 f3 ♘h7! 17 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 18 fxg4 ♕xh4 19 gxh5 ♘g5 20 ♕d2 ♘h3+! 21 gxh3 ♕g3+ with perpetual check (it is a surprising paradox: how often do very sharp variations fizzle out into a draw!), or 16 ♗g3 ♘h7 (16...♘d7!?) 17 e5 f5 18 exf6 ♕xf6 with a complicated struggle (Kramnik-Akopian, Dortmund 2000).

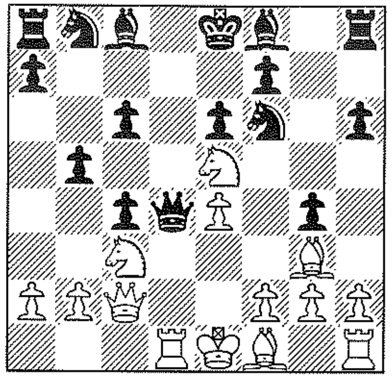
The 'Anti-Moscow Gambit' is an excellent illustration of the rapid development of chess thinking in the last few decades. Today the gambit has an extensive theory, and for the time being the results favour White. Like the Botvinnik Variation, it has been analysed almost to the endgame, and this frightens many players: it is not everyone who wants to step through a minefield, competing as regards length of computer analysis or else relying only on their sense of danger. The times have passed when it was possible, like Spassky, to plunge into a boundless jungle, intuitively hoping that a powerful centre and 'holes' in the opponent's position would bring White victory. The accuracy of play has improved sharply, and so complicated variations like this, as they are studied more and more deeply, gradually disappear from serious grandmaster play and are replaced by others. And so on ad infinitum!

9...g4

Sounder is the typical 9...♗b7 10 0-0-0 ♘bd7 (or 10...♕a5 11 ♘e5 ♗b4!) 11 ♘e5 ♘h5 12 ♗e2 ♘xg3 13 hxg3 ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♕b6. Pachman is tempted by the d4-pawn and it is hard to reproach him for this: nothing immediately decisive for White is apparent. I think that Spassky gave up the second pawn freely, not burdening himself with the calculation of variations – simply in order to open lines for the attack!

10 ♘e5 ♕xd4 11 ♖d1

It was possibly better to play 11 ♗e2 ♗b4 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♕xe4 14 ♕d2 ♘bd7, and now not 15 ♘xg4 ♘d5 16 ♖fe1 ½-½ (Petrosian-Neikirch, Portoroz Interzonal 1958), but 15 f3! with quite good compensation for the missing pawns.



11...♕b6

After 11...♕c5 (ruling out the variation 12 ♘g6? fxg6 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 15 ♕f6 in view of 15...♖h7!) Black may have been afraid of the flashy 12 ♖d8+!? ♔xd8 13 ♘xf7+ ♔e8 14 ♘xh8 ♕g5 15 e5 ♘d5 16 ♘e4 ♗b4+ 17 ♔d1 ♕g7 18 ♘g6! ♔f7! 19 ♘h4, although here it is not at all easy for White to develop his initiative.

12 ♗e2

In 1982 Timoshchenko and I discovered the pretty stroke 12 ♘g6?! fxg6 13 e5 with the idea of 13...♘d5? 14 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 15 ♕f6! ♖h7 16 ♕xf8 ♕d8 17 ♕d6+ ♔e8 18 ♗e2 ♕xd6 19 exd6 h5 20 h3!, but then it transpired that after 13...♔f7 14 exf6 e5! White no longer has any attack: 15 ♗xe5?! ♗f5 16 ♕d2 ♘d7 17 ♗d4 ♗c5 and wins.

12...♘bd7!

In the event of 12...h5 White could now have sacrificed his knight – 13 ♘g6! fxg6 14 e5 ♔f7 15 exf6 ♗b4 (if 15...♘d7, then 16 0-0! ♘xf6 17 ♗e5) 16 0-0 ♗xc3 17 ♕xc3 a5 18 ♗f4 ♘d7 19 ♔h1 ♕c5 20 f3! g3! 21 ♗xg3 h4 22 ♗f2 ♕f5 23 ♖d6! ♖a6 24 b3 with plenty of pressure, which fully compensates for the material deficit (Aseev-V.Popov, Kazan 1995).

13 0-0 (13 ♘xg4!?) **13...♗e7**

Black has a perfectly defensible position (it is not apparent how White can open lines) and more than one good possibility – say, 13...h5!? (*Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*). He is, after all, material up!

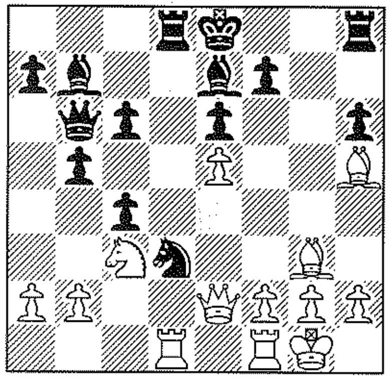
14 ♘xg4 ♘xg4 15 ♗xg4 ♗b7

15...h5!? came into consideration, and if 16 ♗e2(f3), then 16...e5! with a very comfortable game. But White could play 16 ♗h3, maintaining an unclear position.

16 e5! ♘c5

The normal reply. 16...h5? was now bad on account of 17 ♗xe6! fxe6 18 ♕g6+ ♔d8 19 ♕xe6 ♗c8 20 ♘e4 c5 (20...♖f8 21 ♕h3) 21 ♘d6! h4 22 ♗f4 and wins. 16...0-0-0?! was recommended, but after 17 ♗h5!, with the threats of ♗xf7 and ♘e4, White would have seized the initiative.

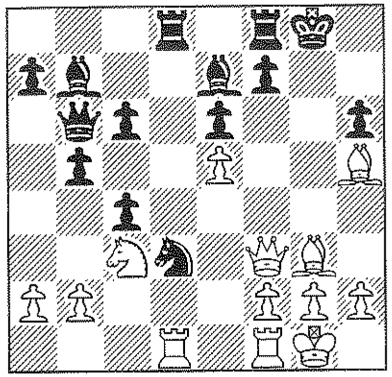
17 ♗h5! ♖d8 18 ♕e2 ♘d3



Black has exploited a trump typical of the given scheme – supported by the c4-pawn, his knight has occupied the key d3-square. And it would appear that, under the cover of such an outpost, he is no longer under threat.

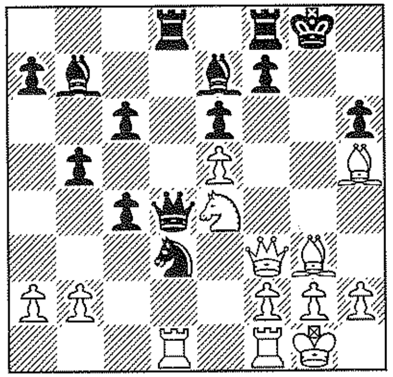
I remember that after the 16th game of my second match with Karpov (1985), Keene called such a knight an 'octopus'. Indeed, it extended its 'tentacles' over the entire board!

19 ♕f3 (consistently continuing the plan of an attack on f7) **19...0-0!**



An important move – after 19...♖f8?! the king would have stood much worse at e8: 20 ♘e4 c5 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 ♕xf6 etc.

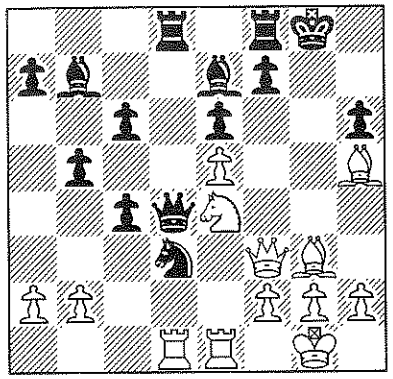
20 ♘e4 ♕d4! (Black only needs to play ...c6-c5, and White's activity will come to a standstill)



21 ♖fe1!

A creative, unusual move: it is time to bring the rook into play – so this must be done, even if it means sacrificing! The threat is 22 ♘f6+! and ♖e4(e3). Spassky is in his element – a chance of creating a direct attack on the king has appeared.

Of course, it was no good to play 21 ♘f6+? ♔g7 22 ♖d2 ♗a8! 23 ♖fd1 c5, or 21 ♘d6? ♗xd6 22 exd6 e5 and ...♖xd6. But why not try to break up the formidable enemy pawns with the help of 21 b3? After all, in the event of 21...c5 (21...♔h8 22 ♘d6!) 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 or 21...♘xe5 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 ♘d3 24 ♕xh6 ♕g7 25 ♕e3 White, by combining the attack on the king with the resolution of his positional problems on the other wing, would have maintained the flame of his initiative. However, after 21...♗a8! and ...c6-c5 things would have been much more difficult for him: 22 bxc4 (22 ♘f6+ ♔g7!) 22...c5 (22...bxc4!?) 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7 24 ♖xd3 ♕xd3 25 ♕g4+ ♔h8 26 ♕f4 ♕d2! with advantage to Black.

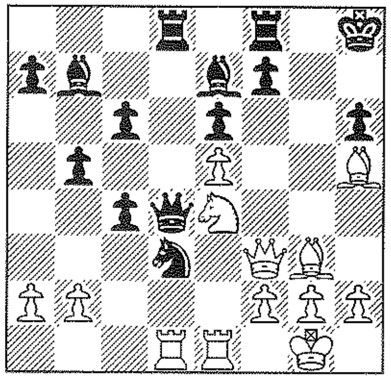


21...♔h8?

White's risky strategy justifies itself! Again we see psychology in action: Pachman moves his king 'out of harm's way,' since it was bad to play 21...♗a8? 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 (otherwise ♖e4!) 23 ♕xf6 c5 24 ♖e3!, and 21...c5? 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 ♖d7 (23...♕xb2 24 ♕xh6) 24 ♖e3!, and 21...♘xe5? 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 ♘d3 24 ♗e5!, and 21...♕xb2? 22 ♘f6+ ♔g7 (22...♗xf6 23 ♕xf6 and ♖e3; 22...♔h8 23 ♖e4! ♗c5?! 24 ♖f1! with the threats of ♖xc4 and ♖h4) 23 ♖e4! (23 ♗f4!?) 23...♕c2 24 ♖h4 ♘c5 25 ♖f1! or 23...♘c5 24 ♖g4+ ♔h8 25 ♗xf7!

But 21...♔g7? is also insufficient on account of 22 ♘d6! ♘xe1 23 ♖xe1, for example: 23...♗a8 24 ♗xf7! ♕d2 25 ♕g4+ ♗g5 (25...♕g5 26 ♕xe6; 25...♔h8 26 ♖d1 ♕c2 27 ♗g6! ♕xb2 28 ♗b1! ♗g5 29 h4 and wins) 26 ♖d1 ♕xb2 27 h4! ♖xf7 28 hxg5 or 23...♗xd6 24 ♕f6+ ♔h7 (24...♔g8 25 ♗xf7+!) 25 ♗xf7 ♕d2 26 ♗g6+ ♔g8 27 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 28 exd6 ♖f6 29 ♕e4 c5 (29...♗c8 30 ♗h5!; 29...♖dxd6 30 ♕e8 ♖d7 31 ♗h5, winning, *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*) 30 ♕xb7+ ♔xg6 31 ♕e4+ ♔g7 32 h3 ♖dxd6 (32...♖fxd6 33 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 34 ♕b7+ and ♕xb5; if 32...a6 the White has the decisive is 33 ♕e7+ ♖f7 34 ♗e5+ or 33...♔g6 34 ♖e4!, while if 32...♔g8 or 32...♖f7, then 33 ♖e3!) 33 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 (33...♕xf2+ 34 ♔h1 ♖xd6 35 ♕e7+ ♔g8 36 ♕e8+ ♕f8 37 ♕xb5) 34 ♕e8! ♖f7 35 ♖e3! ♕f8 36 ♕xb5 ♖xf2 37 ♕xc4 and wins.

Only the bold 21...♘xe1! would have relieved Black's suffering. After 22 ♕g4+ (if 22 ♖xe1? the simplest is 22...c5) 22...♔h8 23 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♕e2! c5! 25 ♘d6 ♗xd6 26 exd6 ♘d3 White would no longer have had to look for a mate, but a way of maintaining the balance: 27 ♗e5+ ♘xe5 28 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 29 h4! (29 ♕xc5? ♖d5) 29...♗a8 (29...♖d8 30 ♕f6 ♖d7 31 ♗xf7+!) 30 g4 a6 31 ♕xc5 ♖d5 32 ♕c7 with equality, or 27 ♕d2!? ♔g7 28 ♕a5 b4 (28...a6 29 ♕c7! ♗c8 30 ♕e7) 29 ♗e2 (not 29 ♕xa7? ♗e4!) 29...a6 30 h3, and if 30...f6, then 31 ♗h5! ♗e4 32 ♕c7+ ♔g8 33 ♕e7 with equality.



22 ♘d6! ♘xe1 (22...♗xd6? 23 ♖e4!) **23 ♖xe1**

Here the exchange does not play an important role, it being far more important to get rid of the all-powerful knight at d3. The surviving white rook joins the assault, whereas the black rooks are inactive.

23...♖xd6?

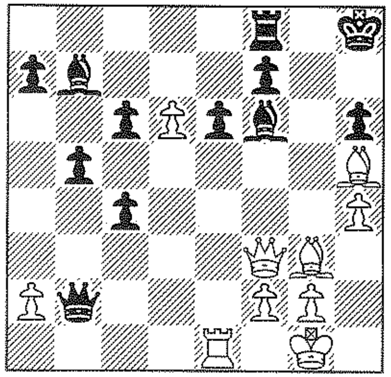
This loses quickly, although it is also not possible to tolerate this knight (White is threatening ♖d1 and ♘xf7+, or immediately ♘xf7+), and the position without the dark-squared bishop after 23...♗xd6 24 exd6! (24 ♕f6+ ♔h7 25 ♗xf7 ♕d2! with equality) 24...f6 (24...♕d2?! 25 ♗e5+! ♔h7 26 ♖d1 ♕g5 27 ♗f6) 25 ♖xe6 ♕xb2 26 h4 (Dolmatov) is rather unpleasant, for example: 26...♗c8 27 ♖e7 ♕b1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕f5 29 ♕e2! ♗d7 30 ♗f7 or 29...♕d3 30 ♕e1! with an attack.

24 exd6 ♗f6 (24...♗xd6? 25 ♖d1) **25 h4?!**

All illusions would have been dispelled by 25 d7! ♔g7 (or 25...♕xb2 26 ♗xf7 ♔g7 27 ♗e8) 26 ♖d1 ♕xb2 27 ♗d6 ♖d8 28 ♗e7, winning. But Spassky again does not go into details, reckoning that in any case the position is already won, and he unhurriedly makes an escape square for his king.

25...♕xb2

Pachman almost certainly did not see his opponent's reply. However, if 25...♔g7 White would have won by 26 ♖d1! ♕b6 (26...♕xb2 27 d7!) 27 d7 c5 28 ♕g4+ ♔h7 29 ♗d6.



26 ♗xf7!

A brilliant stroke, crowning White's aggressive strategy. 26 d7 ♕c3 27 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 28 ♖d1 ♗a5 29 ♗d6 ♖d8 30 ♗e7 ♔g7 was no longer so clear.

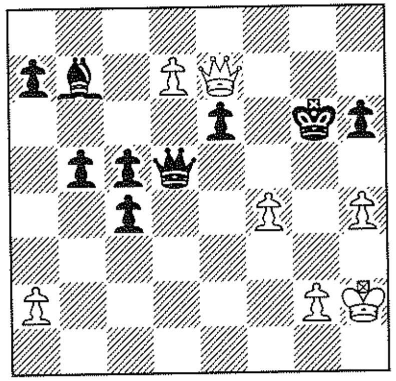
26...♖xf7

26...♕c3 27 ♖e3 ♕a1+ 28 ♔h2 ♖xf7

would appear to be more tenacious, since after 29 ♖xe6 ♕d4 30 ♖e8+ ♔g7 31 ♕f5 ♖f8! 32 d7 ♕d5 33 ♖xf8 ♕xf5 34 d8♕ ♗xd8 35 ♖xf5 (*Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*) 35...♗e7! Black's strong queenside pawns give him good saving chances. However, after 29 ♕h5! ♔g7 (29...♔g8 30 ♖xe6) 30 ♗f4! ♔g8 (30...♕d4 31 ♖g3+) 31 ♗xh6 ♕d4 32 ♕g6+ ♗g7 33 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 (33...♖xg7 34 ♕xe6+; 33...♕xh4+ 34 ♖h3 ♕f4+ 35 ♖g3 ♕h4+ 36 ♔g1) 34 ♕xe6 ♔h7 35 d7! ♖xd7 36 ♕f5+ the game is over.

27 ♗e5! ♕c2?!

In the time scramble Pachman misses the strongest defence: 27...♗xe5! (27...♕d2? 28 ♗xf6+ ♔h7 29 ♕e4+; 27...c5? 28 ♕xf6+ ♖xf6 29 ♗xb2) 28 ♕xf7 ♕c3! Now there is only one way to win – 29 ♕f8+ ♔h7 30 ♖xe5! ♕a1+ 31 ♔h2 ♕xe5+ 32 f4 ♕d5! 33 ♕e7+ ♔g6 34 d7 c5, and here White would have had to display exceptional ingenuity.



Analysis diagram

The crude attempt to queen the pawn – 35 h5+? ♕xh5+ 36 ♔g3 ♕d5 37 ♕e8+ ♔g7 38 ♔h4 ends in perpetual check: 38...♕e4! 39 d8♕ ♕xf4+ 40 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 41 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 42 ♔f2 ♕f4+ 43 ♔e2 ♕e5+ 44 ♔d1 ♕a1+ 45 ♔d2 ♕b2+.

However, back in 1996 I discovered a surprising resource – 35 f5+! Now if 35...♕xf5 White wins with the fine quiet move 36 ♕d6!, seizing control of the h2-b8 diagonal (36...♕g4 37 ♕g3!). It is also unsuitable to play 35...♔xf5 36 ♕f7+ ♔e5 (36...♔g4 37 ♕f3+) 37 ♕h5+ with the exchange of queens, while after the best move 35...exf5 36 h5+! is now decisive after 36...♔xh5 37 ♕e8+ ♔g4 38 ♕g6+ ♔f4 39 ♕g3+ ♔e4 40 ♕f3+ and the pawn queens. It need hardly be said that the latest Junior and Fritz confirm the correctness of my analysis literally in seconds.

Pachman's final mistake allows White to land a thematic blow 'in memory of the 25th move'.

28 d7! (weaving a mating net) **28...♔g8 29 ♕xf6! ♖xd7 30 ♖e3 1-0**

Some individual moves of Spassky in this game can be criticised, of course, but on the whole it is very typical of his play. Firstly, it was one of the most outstanding tournaments of those times and sitting opposite him was not some run-of-the-mill grandmaster, but a prominent theoretician, a participant in five Interzonals. But it was Spassky alone who played chess, whereas Pachman was merely a spectator, unable to resist the enormous pressure!

Secondly, we have once again seen how subtly Boris Vasilievich sensed the dynamic and critical moments of the game. Here he was perhaps even superior to the other great players. In the 1960s his active positional feeling gave him an advantage over his contemporaries, and when Spassky played with full intensity he was practically unbeatable. But, while excellently seeing and understanding the picture as a whole, he frequently neglected details, 'trifles' and precise move orders. Which in the end caused his downfall in the match with Fischer, who was, by contrast, just such an accurate, concrete player...

A burnt-out Star

As I have already mentioned, the Riga catastrophe repeated itself at the close of the 28th USSR Championship (February 1961): Spassky was again unable to cope with the nervous tension, and he lost to the Lvov master Stein, who was making his debut, thereby allowing the latter to qualify for the Interzonal tournament. However, losing to such an opponent was nothing to be ashamed of: Leonid Zakharovich Stein (1934-1973) was one of the finest players of those times.

Unfortunately, his name has been almost forgotten in the chess world, especially outside of the former Soviet Union (possibly because Stein achieved his main successes – and what successes! – precisely within the territory of the USSR). I will try at least partially to fill this gap, by reminding the readers of the dramatic fate of the Ukrainian grandmaster.

Stein began far more modestly than Spassky or Tal: not until the age of 13 was he accepted into the chess club of the city's Pioneers Palace (his first teacher was the master Alexey Sokolsky), at 18 he became a candidate master, and at 24 – a master. 'Already then Stein was staggering for both his talent and... the flippancy of his play,' recalls the well-known trainer Viktor Kart. 'He would find his bearings in a position like a clairvoyant. Whereas, when an experienced player is considering his move, at any moment he sees only part of the board, Stein would "grasp" the entire board, foreseeing in some way the resulting positions. When he began to demonstrate the variations that he had seen, the board would appear to move... And yet, while possessing such a priceless talent that was obvious to everyone, Stein was highly impatient, quite incapable of forcing himself to think at the board, and he was constantly taking hasty decisions, which his experienced opponents would exploit.'

Yes, he was an impulsive, impressionable and vulnerable person – but what a fearless fighter! An impression of Stein's style is given by the following game, which became, as it were, his visiting card. It proclaimed to the world that, following Bronstein and Tal, another subverter of the strict positional truths of the Botvinnik era had arrived into the chess arena.

Game 55
N.Krogius-L.Stein
Ukraine-Russia Match, Kiev 1960
King's Indian Defence E92

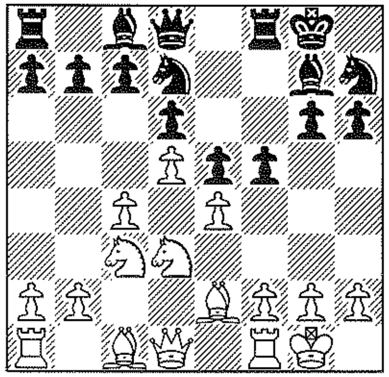
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7

The favourite defence of Stein – a worthy successor to the Ukrainian 'King's Indian school': Konstantinopolsky, Boleslavsky, Bronstein, Geller...

4 e4 0-0 5 ♗e2 d6 6 ♘f3 e5 7 d5 h6?!

A somewhat artificial way of leading the opponent away from the theoretical paths, by avoiding Petrosian's move ♗g5. Subsequently Stein resorted to 7...a5! (*Game No.67*).

8 0-0 (8 h3 or 8 ♘d2 a5 9 ♘f1 ♘bd7(a6) 10 g4 is considered to be a good alternative) **8...♘h7 9 ♘e1 ♘d7 10 ♘d3 f5**



11 f3

Another good idea is the typical 'anti-King's Indian' method 11 exf5 gxf5 12 f4 (Euwe), or even the immediate counter in the centre – 11 f4.

11...f4 12 b4 ♖f7?!

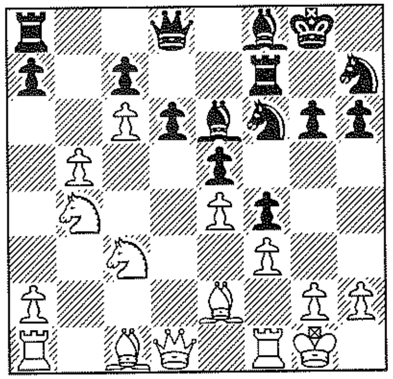
Staking everything on his attack (12...a5 was more cautious). 'Black intends the following regrouping: ...♗f8, ...♖g7 and ...g6-g5-g4, with the h7-knight strengthening the attack by going to g5. Therefore White forces events on the queenside.' (Stein) Classic King's Indian intrigue!

13 c5! ♘df6 14 c6! bxc6 15 dxc6 ♗e6

16 b5

For the moment Krogius plays correctly, and is clearly ahead of the opponent in the development of his initiative. 16 ♕e1?! and ♗d1-b3, recommended by Gufeld and Lazarev, is inferior, if only because of 16...a6, when White is hindered by the weakness of his c6-pawn.

16...♗f8 17 ♘b4



White has won the strategic battle: he has a clear plan – to occupy d5, exchange knights and light-squared bishops, and then break through on the queenside. If Black does not undertake something extraordinary, his position will quickly become critical.

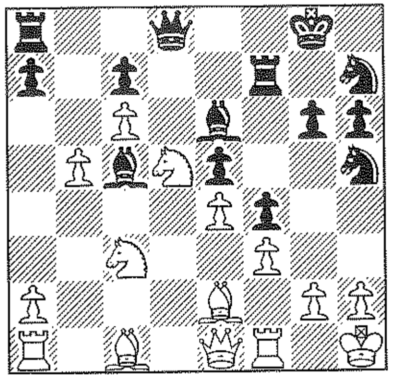
17...d5!

'Beginning an exceptionally complicated combination, which does not lend itself to precise evaluation.' (Polugayevsky) Correct or not, this freeing sacrifice is Black's only chance!

18 ♘bxd5

18 exd5!? also came into consideration. It would appear that after 18...♗c5+ (18...♗f5 19 ♘a6) 19 ♔h1 ♗f5 20 ♘d3 (20 ♕b3? ♘h5) 20...♗d4 21 ♗b2 Black does not manage to create a counterattack: 21...♘h5 22 ♘e4 and if 22...♗xe4 23 fxe4 ♘g3+ 24 hxg3 fxg3 White is rescued by 25 ♗g4 ♕h4+ 26 ♗h3 ♖xf1+ 27 ♕xf1 ♗xb2 28 ♘xb2 ♘g5 29 d6 ♘xh3 30 gxh3 ♖f8 31 ♕g2, winning. However, the move in the game poses no less serious problems.

18...♗c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♘h5 20 ♕e1

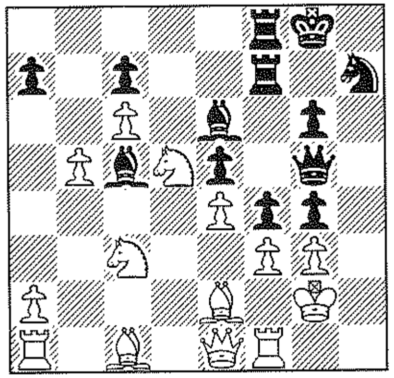


This is what Krogius was counting on: although the black bishop has occupied an attacking diagonal, no concrete threats are apparent. But it is here that Stein's wild imagination, comparable with Tal's combinative enlightenment, displays itself. As regards the degree of risk in this game, the Lvov player perhaps even surpassed the 'Riga magician.'

20...♘g3+!

'The compensation for this second sacrifice is not immediately apparent. The black queen does not give mate on the h-file. But it bursts into the centre of events, and behind it, like infantry behind a powerful tank, the attacking reserves are brought up towards the white king,' write Gufeld and Lazarev in their book *Leonid Stein*.

21 hxg3 ♕g5 22 g4 h5 23 g3! hxg4 24 ♔g2 ♖af8!

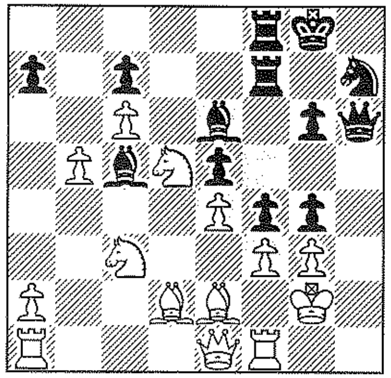


It was for this position that Stein sacrificed a piece. Black still does not have a single concrete threat, but he plays as though nothing has happened: he wants to move his queen and then advance the g-pawn. Somewhat abstract, wouldn't you agree? But on the other hand, very bold!

25 ♗d2

Gufeld and Lazarev attach a question mark to this move and recommend 25 ♖h1, but it is doubtful whether this was stronger: 25...♗d4 26 ♖b1 ♘f6 27 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 (27...♖xf6 28 ♘a4 ♗e3 is also unclear) 28 ♗a3 (28 gxf4 exf4 29 ♘d5 ♕g5!) 28...fxg3 29 ♕xg3 gxf3+ 30 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 31 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 32 ♗xf8 ♖xc3 with a sharp endgame. As one delves into the labyrinth of variations, the formal computer evaluation '+-' (materialism!) steadily reduces...

25...♕h6! (the tank makes way for the infantry)



26 ♖h1?!

In my opinion, the correct move was the unexpected 26 fxg4! ♘g5 27 ♖h1 ♕g7 with two possible continuations:

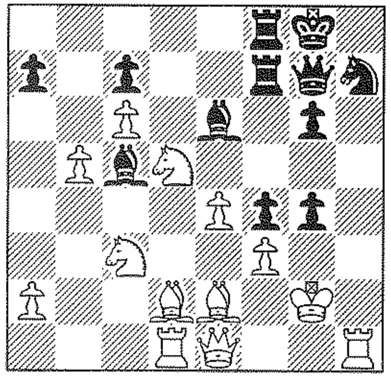
1) 28 gxf4 exf4 29 ♗f3! (not 29 ♔f1 ♕d4) 29...♕d4 30 ♘e2! ♘xf3 (30...♕d3?! 31 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 32 ♕h4+ ♘h7 33 ♗c3+ ♔g8 34 ♕h6 ♖e8 35 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 36 ♘f6 and wins) 31 ♘xd4!, giving up a piece, but after 31...♘xe1+ 32 ♖axe1 f3+ (32...♗xd4 33 ♔f3! ♖d8 34 ♗b4) 33 ♔f2 ♗xd4+ 34 ♗e3 obtaining a clear advantage;

2) 28 ♗d1!? f3+ 29 ♔f1 ♕h7 30 ♖h4!, and if 30...♗xg4, then 31 ♗e3! f2 32 ♖xh7 fxe1♕+ 33 ♔xe1 ♖f1+ 34 ♔d2 ♗xe3+ 35 ♘xe3 ♔xh7 36 ♘xg4 and wins.

This is merely an illustration of White's resources: he should probably have been able to parry the attack and gain an advantage. But remember that for some reason Tal's opponents also found a way to win once the game was over! This indicates the great role of dynamics in 'human' chess: the great romantics were able to create such complicated, irrational positions, that their objective evaluation did not play the decisive role, but became secondary.

26...♕g7 (with the first threat – ...f4xg3) **27 gxf4 exf4** (intending ...g6-g5, then ...g4xf3+ and ...g5-g4) **28 ♖d1**

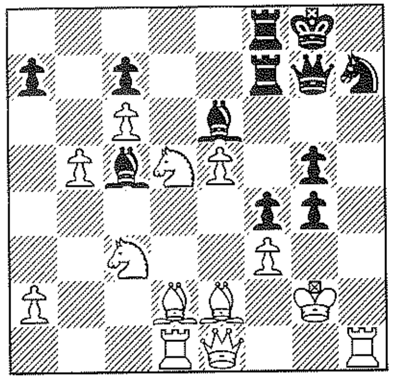
Complicated play would have resulted from 28 ♘a4!? ♗d4 29 ♗c3 (driving away the bishop; if 29 ♖c1, then 29...♗xd5! 30 exd5 ♖e8 31 ♕d1 ♘g5 32 ♔f1 gxf3 33 ♗xf3 ♖e3 34 ♗g4 ♕e5 with an attack) 29...♗xd5 30 exd5 ♖e8! 31 ♕d2 (31 ♗xd4?! ♕xd4 32 ♕d1 ♕e5 33 ♖e1 ♕g5!) 31...♖xe2+ 32 ♕xe2 ♗xc3 33 ♘xc3 (or 33 ♖af1 ♗e5 34 ♘c5 ♘g5 35 ♘e6 ♕f6 36 ♘xg5 ♕xg5) 33...♕xc3 34 ♖af1 ♔g7 35 ♕e1 ♕b2+ and it is by no means easy for White to convert his exchange advantage.



28...g5!

The position becomes sharper: as soon as the f3-pawn is destroyed and the connected passed f- and g-pawns begin advancing, White's extra piece, situated on the other side of the board, will cease to have any importance. This entire unpretentious construction – ♕g7, ♖f8 and ♖f7 – is able to strike at the white king like a tight spring.

29 e5! (diversion)



29...♕xe5

Here 29...gxf3+? 30 ♗xf3 g4 is bad on account of 31 ♗e4 f3+ 32 ♔g3 f2 33 ♕e2 ♖f3+ 34 ♔g2 ♖h3 35 ♘f4, winning.

30 fxg4?

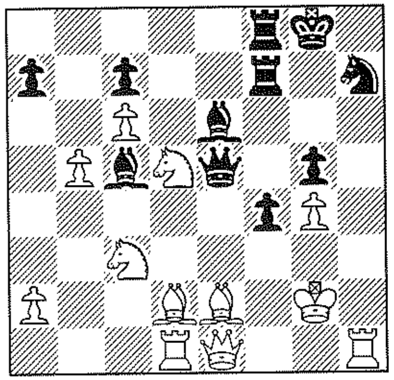
I don't know whether a human, in time-trouble and in such a wild position, would be capable of finding the study-like machine move 30 ♖h6! Now 30...♗xd5? 31 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 32 ♖g6+ is bad for Black, and the best reply is evidently 30...♖e8!, for example:

1) 31 ♗d3 gxf3+ 32 ♔h1 ♗xd5 33 ♘xd5 ♗e3 34 ♖g6+ ♖g7 35 ♘xe3 ♖xg6 36 ♗xg6 fxe3 with crazy play: 37 ♗xe8 e2! (after 37...♕xe8 38 ♕g3! ♕h5+ 39 ♕h2 ♕xh2+ 40 ♔xh2 e2 41 ♖c1 f2 42 ♔g2 f1♕+ 43 ♖xf1 exf1♕+ 44 ♔xf1 ♘f6 it is Black who has to find a way to save himself) 38 ♖b1 (the only move; 38 ♖c1? ♘f6! 39 ♗c3 ♕d5! and the black pawns promote) 38...♘f6 39 ♖b4! ♕xe8 40 ♔g1 ♘e4 41 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 42 ♔f2 g4 43 ♕a1 ♕e7 44 ♕g1 ♕c5+ 45 ♗e3 ♕b4 46 ♗d2 with equality;

2) 31 ♗c4! gxf3+ 32 ♔h1 ♕f5 33 ♕e4 ♕g4 34 ♖h2! (34 ♘xf4 ♘f8!! 35 ♕e5 ♖xf4 36 ♕h8+ ♔f7 37 ♖h7+ ♘xh7 38 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 39 ♕h6+ ♔e7 40 ♕g7+ ♗f7 41 ♕e5+ ♔f8 42 ♕h8+ with perpetual check) 34...f2 35 ♘e2 ♕f5! (not 35...♖d8 36 ♗c3 ♗f5? 37 ♘e7+ or 36...♖d6 37 ♖f1) 36 ♕xf5 ♗xf5 37 ♘ec3 (37 ♘dc3? ♗g4! 38 ♗xf7+? ♔xf7 39 ♖xh7+ ♔g6 and wins) 37...♗g4 38 ♘xc7 ♗xd1 39 ♘xe8 ♗f3+ 40 ♖g2 f1♕+ 41 ♗xf1 ♖e7 42 ♗c4+ ♔f8 43 c7 ♖xe8 44 ♗e6 ♗b7 45 ♗d5 and White nevertheless retains the advantage.

But, worn out by the preceding blows, it was extremely hard for Krogius to find his way through these complications (in addition, he was unnerved by the fact that he was quite unable to find a win with his extra piece, and move by move the psychology increasingly worked against him). It was this that Leonid anticipated! Enormous self-belief, intuition, the ability to take a risk at a critical moment and go in for very dangerous play with counter-chances for the opponent – it is precisely these qualities that distinguish great players.

After White's mistake there follows another flash of imagination by Stein.

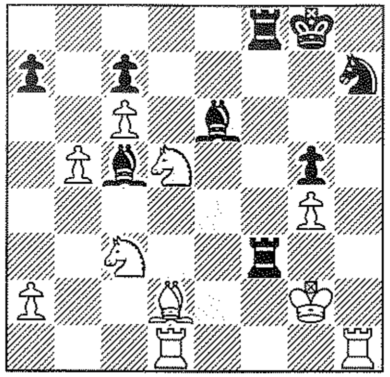


30...♕xe2+!! (of course, not 30...f3+? 31 ♗xf3 ♕xe1 32 ♖hxe1 ♖xf3 33 ♖xe6 ♖f2+ 34 ♔h1 ♖8f3 35 ♗e3! and wins) **31 ♕xe2**

After allowing such a stunning blow, it is hard to compose oneself and find the narrow path to a draw.

'After 31 ♘xe2 ♗xd5+ a ruinous blaze flares up in the white king's residence: 32 ♔h3 ♘f6! with the threat of ...♖h7 mate, while if 32 ♔f1, then 32...f3! is immediately decisive.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) However, after 32...f3? White has the strong response 33 ♘d4! ♗xd4 (33...f2? 34 ♕e5) 34 ♗e3! f2 35 ♕b4 ♗xh1 36 ♕xd4 and White is the one who is more likely to win. In my opinion, 32...♗xh1 is better, although after 33 ♗b4! f3 34 ♗xc5 fxe2+ 35 ♔xe2 ♖e8+ 36 ♗e3 ♗f3+ 37 ♔d3 the queen should be able to help White withstand Black's onslaught. However, 31 ♕xe2 is also not the losing move.

31...f3+ 32 ♕xf3 ♖xf3



33 ♖hf1?

Capitulation. It would appear that White could have saved himself by 33 ♗e1! ♗xg4 34 ♘e4 ♖a3 35 ♘xc5 ♗xd1 36 ♘e7+ ♔g7 (36...♔h8 37 ♘g6+) 37 ♘e6+ ♔f7 38 ♘xf8 ♗f3+ 39 ♔g1 ♘xf8 40 ♖h2 ♖e3 41 ♗b4 ♖xe7 (41...♖e4 42 ♖b2) 42 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 43 ♖d2 ♘e6 44 ♔f2 g4 45 ♖d7+ ♔f6 46 ♔g3 ♔e5 47 a4! ♗d5 48 ♔xg4 ♗b3 49 a5 ♗a4 50 b6 axb6 51 axb6 cxb6 52 ♖b7 with a draw.

But I think by this point Krogius was no longer in a condition to control the situation on the board.

33...♗xg4 (it is all over) **34 ♘e4 ♗h3+ 35 ♔h2 ♖xf1 36 ♖xf1 ♗xf1 37 ♘xc5 ♖f2+ 38 ♔g1 ♖xd2 39 ♘xc7 ♗h3 40 a4 ♖g2+ 41 ♔h1 ♘f6 42 a5 ♘g4 43 ♘e4 ♖e2 0-1**

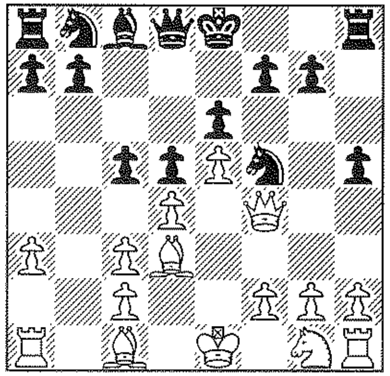
Let us now see what the 26-year-old Lvov master produced early in 1961 in his first USSR Championship, where four qualifying places for the Interzonal tournament were up for grabs. It appeared that the novice had little chance against the dozen top-class grandmasters headed by ex-world champion Smyslov. But step by step Stein adapted to the superstar company and even inflicted the only defeat on the future tournament winner – the invincible Petrosian!

Game 56
L.Stein-T.Petrosian
28th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1961, 6th round
French Defence C18

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 (6...♕c7 – *Volume 2, Game No.127*) **7 ♕g4 ♘f5**

An old way of avoiding the sharp variation 7...cxd4 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 ♕c7 10 ♘e2. Nowadays 7...0-0! 8 ♗d3 ♘bc6 is preferred, meeting 9 ♘f3 with 9...f5; therefore White has adopted 9 ♕h5 and Black, in turn, is more inclined towards an early 8...f5 (the history of this variation will be described in more detail in a later volume).

8 ♗d3 h5 9 ♕f4



If 9 ♕h3 Black had in mind 9...cxd4 10 g4 (10 ♗xf5 exf5 11 cxd4 ♘c6 is quieter) 10...♘e7 11 cxd4 ♕c7 12 ♘e2 ♘bc6 13 0-0 ♗d7 14 gxh5 0-0-0 (Dubinin-Petrosian, Gorky 1950) or 10 ♘f3 ♕c7! (but not 10...♘c6? 11 g4 ♘fe7 12 gxh5! ♕c7 13 ♗f4 ♘g6 14 ♕g4... 1-0 Tal-Petrosian, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957) 11 ♖b1?! dxc3

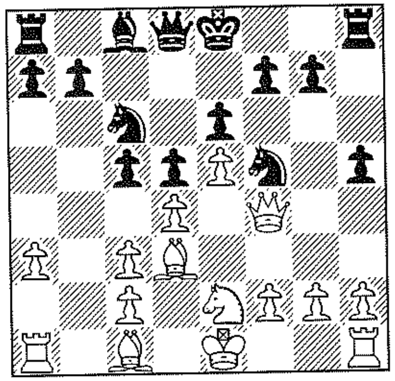
12 g4 ♘e7 13 gxh5 ♘bc6 14 ♗f4 ♘g6! 15 ♗g3 ♘gxe5... 0-1 (Tal-Korchnoi, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958).

9...♘c6?!

The source game Bogoljubow-Flohr (Nottingham 1936) went 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♕h4 11 ♘f3 ♕xf4 12 ♗xf4 ♘c6 13 c3 ♗d7 with equality, but after 11 ♕xh4! ♘xh4 12 ♗g5 ♘f5 13 ♘e2 ♘c6 14 c3 White has the better endgame. This is also the case after 9...♕h4 10 ♘e2 ♕xf4 11 ♘xf4 ♘e7 12 ♗e2 h4 (12...g6 13 dxc5!) 13 ♘h5! ♔f8 14 ♗g5 cxd4?! 15 cxd4 (Gligoric-Pachman, Munich Olympiad 1958; Tal-Petrosian, 50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983).

Petrosian wanted to outplay the debutant in a complicated struggle, and therefore chose to avoid the exchange of queens. But, as is shown by modern-day praxis, 9...♕c7 is more flexible (Short-Pelletier, Zurich rapidplay 2001; Svidler-Pelletier, Biel 2001).

10 ♘e2 (10 ♘f3!?)



10...♘ce7

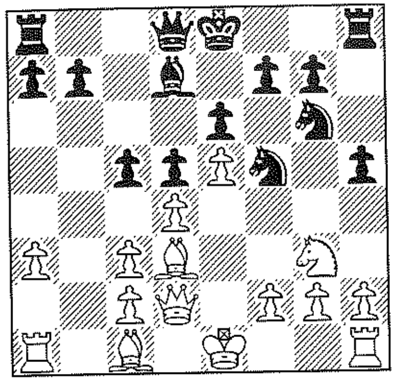
White also retains the initiative in the event of 10...c4 (10...♘h4? 11 ♕g3!) 11 ♗xf5 exf5 12 ♕g3, or 10...♘fe7!? 11 dxc5 ♕c7 12 ♕g3 ♕xe5 13 ♗f4 ♕f6 14 ♗g5 ♕e5 15 f4 ♕c7 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♕xg7 ♖f8 (17...♕f8 18 ♕xf8+ and 19 c4!) 18 ♕g5 (Stein-Lein, 32nd USSR Championship, Kiev 1964).

11 ♘g3 ♘g6?!

Black avoids the tedious 11...c4 12 ♗xf5 ♘xf5 (12...exf5 13 ♕g5) 13 ♘xf5 exf5 14 a4 and ♗a3 (Euwe) or 14 ♕g3!? In Stein's opinion, Black should have prepared queenside castling by 11...♗d7, although, in my view, here too after 12 0-0 ♕a5 (12...♕c7? 13 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 14 ♗xf5 exf5 15 e6 and wins) 13 ♗d2 Black has an unattractive position.

12 ♕d2 ♗d7

If 12...cxd4 Euwe gives 13 cxd4 ♘gh4 (13...♘xd4? 14 ♗xg6) 14 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 15 ♗xf5 exf5 16 a4 and ♗a3 (a typical 'French' motif), but 13 ♘xf5! exf5 14 cxd4 is even better.



13 ♖b1!

Now, as Panov wittily commented, 'the black king is forced to remain in the centre, since kingside castling, although possible, is undesirable, while queenside castling, though desirable, is impossible.' Petrosian has lured his opponent into a major battle – and the latter proves to be in his element!

13...♖b8

If 13...♕c7, then 14 ♕g5! cxd4 15 ♘xf5 exf5 16 cxd4 ♕c3+ 17 ♕d2 ♕xd4 18 ♖xb7 ♕xe5+ (18...♘xe5? 19 ♗b2) 19 ♔d1 (Beim) or 17 ♔f1 ♕xd4 18 ♖xb7 with a strong attack.

14 0-0 c4 (it is dangerous to play 14...h4 15 ♘xf5 exf5 16 ♖e1 c4? 17 e6! or 16...0-0 17 dxc5) **15 ♗e2 ♘xg3**

'After 15...h4 16 ♘xf5 exf5 17 ♗f3 ♗e6 18 a4! White's advantage is obvious.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

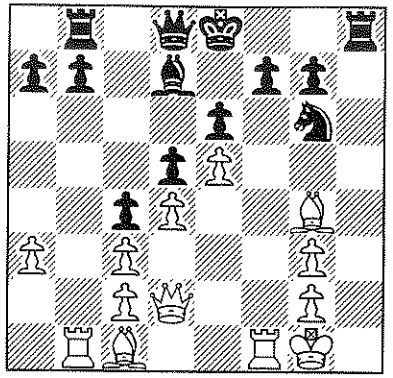
16 fxg3! (opening lines for the attack) **16...h4**

Black rids himself of his h-pawn. If 16...♗a4 the commentators unanimously recommended 17 h4!, fixing the weakness at h5 and threatening ♕d1.

17 ♗g4

Gufeld and Lazarev attach an exclamation mark to this move, but a stronger alternative was the anti-blockading 17 a4! (Ftacnik) 17...hxg3 18 hxg3 ♗xa4 19 ♗a3 with a powerful initiative.

17...hxg3 18 hxg3



18...♕e7?!

Continuing the series of not the best moves: the character of the position is such that it is not easy for Black to find the correct course. 18...♗a4! was essential – in Euwe's opinion, after 19 ♕f2 0-0 20 ♗e3 White would have retained the advantage, but, firstly, 20 ♗h5! is more accurate, and secondly, after 19...♕c7! Black's fortress is still perfectly defensible.

This is an interesting moment from the psychological point of view. It stands to reason that such an experienced French player as Petrosian could not have forgotten about the typical blockading manoeuvre ...♗a4 – it was simply that he underestimated the pawn sacrifice a3-a4, or, more likely, deliberately provoked it, not believing in the strength of White's attack.

19 a4! (the emergence of the bishop at a3 is far more important than the pawn) **19...♗xa4**

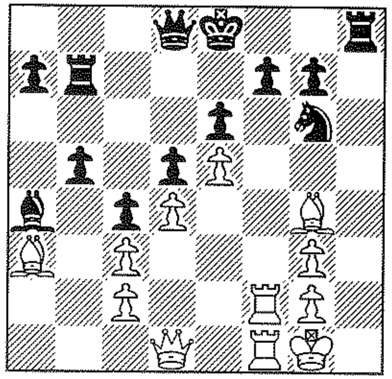
It is unfavourable to play 19...0-0 20 ♖a1! ♕d8 21 ♗a3 ♖e8 22 ♗d6 etc., while after 19...f5 (19...f6 20 ♕e2) 20 exf6 gxf6 21 ♕e2 (Ftacnik) 21...♔d8 22 ♗h5 ♗e8 23 g4 difficult trials await the black king.

20 ♖a1 b5 21 ♗a3 ♕d7 22 ♖f2 ♖b7 23 ♖af1 ♕d8

'It appears that Black has defended everything. He would not have saved the game by either 23...♕c8 24 ♕g5! (with the threat of ♕xg6) 24...♖h6 25 ♗h5! *(25...♕d8 26 ♕g4! – G.K.)*, or 23...♘f8 24 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 25 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26 ♗xf8 ♖hxf8 27 ♗xe6.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) For example: 27...♖f1+ 28 ♔h2 ♖h8+ 29 ♗h3 with a technical win. In fact, it is even better to play 24 ♕g5! g6 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 26 ♕xg6.

24 ♕d1

Previously this move was accompanied by an exclamation mark, but, taking account of the following comment, grandmaster Valery Beim suggested 24 ♕e2! b4! (24...a5 25 ♗xe6!) 25 ♗xb4 ♕g5 26 ♗a3 ♕h6 27 ♗h3 ♕h5 28 ♕e1!? ♗c6 29 ♕a1 'with a clear advantage for White.'



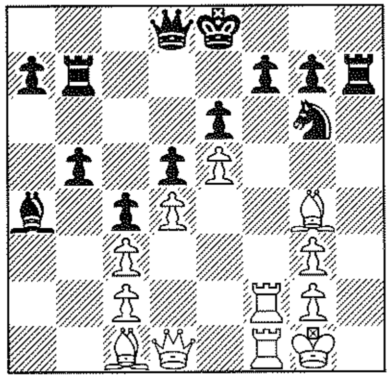
24...♖h6?

The decisive mistake. It was also bad to play both 24...♕c8? 25 ♗h5! and 24...♕g5? 25 ♗c1! ♕d8 26 ♗h5! After 24...a5?!, following Gufeld and Lazarev, Ftacnik recommends 25 ♖xf7? ♖xf7 26 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 27 ♕f3+ ♔e8 28 ♗xe6 ♕c7? 29 ♗d6 ♕b7 30 ♗xd5, missing 28...♘xe5! 29 ♕f4 (29 dxe5 ♕b6+) 29...b4 30 cxb4 axb4 31 ♗xb4 ♕b6 when Black wins.

After discovering this counter-blow, Beim also indicated the correct way: 25 ♗xe6! fxe6 26 ♕g4 ♘e7 27 ♕xg7 ♔d7 28 ♖f8 ♖xf8 29 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 30 ♕xf8 b4 31 cxb4 axb4 32 ♗c1 and wins. Instead of 29...♕xf8, 29...b4!? 30 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 31 cxb4 axb4 32 ♗c1 b3 33 cxb3 cxb3 34 ♗b2 ♗e8 is more tenacious, but here too White has real winning chances after 35 ♕f6 ♔d7 36 g4.

In Beim's opinion, the only defence was 24...b4! (diverting the bishop away from the c1-square) 25 ♗xb4 (after 25 cxb4 ♗b5 'for the moment Black holds on') 25...♕g5!, for example: 26 ♗a3 ♕h6!? 27 ♗h3 ♕e3 28 ♕a1 ♖xh3! 29 gxh3 (29 ♗c1? ♕xg3 30 ♕xa4+ ♔f8) 29...♕xg3+ 30 ♖g2 (30 ♔h1 ♕xh3+ 31 ♖h2 ♕g4! with equality) 30...♕e3+ 31 ♖ff2 ♘h4 32 ♖xg7 ♗xc2 or 26 ♕e2 ♕h6! 27 ♗h3 ♘f8! 28 ♗a3 (28 ♖f4 ♘g6 29 ♖4f2 ♘f8 with equality) 28...♘h7 29 ♖f4 ♕g6! 'with complicated play, not unfavourable for Black'. For this reason 24 ♕e2! is more accurate.

25 ♗c1! ♖h7 (25...♖h8 26 ♗h5!)



26 ♗xe6! 1-0

26...fxe6 27 ♕g4 or 26...♘h8 27 ♕f3. Few players managed to crush the great Petrosian so spectacularly and quickly!

After this game Leonid moved up into the leading group and gained several more important wins, defeating, among others, Geller, Bronstein and, in the final round, Spassky.

I shall now analyse this in some sense historic duel, which decided the fate of the fourth qualifying place to the Interzonal tournament (the first three went to Petrosian, Korchnoi and Geller). The two players were equal on points, and in the event of a draw would have had to meet again in a play-off match. Therefore Spassky, like Petrosian in the previous game, tried to outplay his less experienced opponent with Black, by choosing, in the words of Bondarevsky, 'a tempting, but essentially bad opening variation.'

Game 57
L.Stein-B.Spassky
28th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1961, 19th round
Ruy Lopez C64

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♗c5

The rare 'Classical Variation'. Spassky adopted it from Tolush, while in Stein's entire career it occurred only once – in this game!

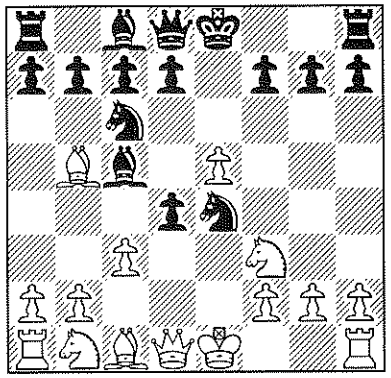
4 c3 (after 4 0-0 Spassky confidently played 4...♘d4 5 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 6 c3 ♗b6 7 d4 c6 8 ♗a4(c4) d6 with equality) **4...♘f6**

The risky 4...f5!? justified itself in Gligoric-Spassky (Amsterdam Interzonal 1964).

5 d4 exd4

The alternative is 5...♗b6 (Unzicker-Fischer, Leipzig Olympiad 1960; Belyavsky-Ivanchuk, Linares 1989).

6 e5 ♘e4



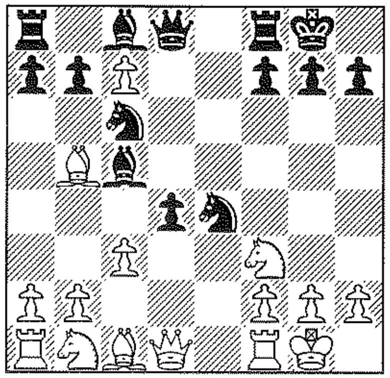
7 0-0

In the old days they also analysed 7 ♕e2 d5 8 exd6 0-0 (8...♗f5!?) 9 dxc7 ♕d5, while the history of the 7 cxd4 ♗b4+ variation extends from 8 ♔f1 (Albin-Steinitz, Nürnberg 1896) to 8 ♗d2 (Jimenez-Fischer, Leipzig Olympiad 1960) and 8 ♘bd2!? (Short-Kamsky, 4th matchgame, Linares 1994).

7...d5 8 exd6

At that time it was considered less promising to play 8 ♘xd4 0-0 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♗e3 ♕e8 11 f3 ♘d6 12 ♗f2 (Gligoric-Keller, Zurich 1959) 12...♘c4!, (Euwe), or 10 f3 ♘g5 11 ♗e3 f6 12 ♔h1 ♗xd4 13 cxd4 fxe5 14 dxe5 ♗a6 (Gligoric-Fischer, Buenos Aires 1960), with equality in each case.

8...0-0 (this was played back in 1864 by Max Lange; Black is prevented from castling after 8...♘xd6?! 9 ♗xc6+ bxc6 10 cxd4 ♗b6 11 ♗g5! f6 12 ♖e1+) **9 dxc7**



9...♕f6?

'This is what Spassky had prepared! Stein was ready for the usual 9...♕xc7 10 cxd4 ♗d6 (it is bad to play 10...♖d8 11 ♕c2! ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 13 ♗e3) 11 ♘c3 ♗f5 12 ♖e1 (Kupper-Paoli, Amsterdam 1954), reckoning that here Black does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn,' wrote Gufeld and Lazarev, ignoring the improvement that was already known by that time: 10...♘xd4! 11 ♘xd4 ♕b6 12 ♗d3?! (12 ♕e2 ♘d6! or 12 ♗e3 ♖d8 with equality) 12...♘xf2! 13 ♖xf2 ♗xd4 with a dangerous initiative for Black.

It is strange that Spassky preferred a gamble that does not have any real counter-chances. Apparently this was a consequence of the crack that appeared in his play after the highly vexing defeat against Polugayevsky (*Game No.53*). Incidentally, 9...♕f6? was not a new move. It had already been employed in correspondence tournaments, but Stein learned of this only after the game.

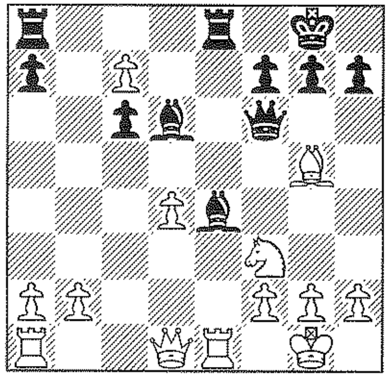
10 ♗xc6 (10 ♕c2?! ♗f5 11 ♗d3 dxc3 12 ♘xc3 ♘b4 13 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 14 ♕xc5 ♘xd3 with equality, Salm-Nielsen, correspondence 1954/56) **10...bxc6 11 cxd4 ♗d6**

Euwe suggested 11...♗b6 12 ♖e1 ♗f5, in order after 13 ♘c3 ♖fe8 14 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 15 ♗g5 ♕d6 16 ♗d8 ♗xc7 17 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 to try and hold out a pawn down. However, it is stronger to play 13 ♗f4! and ♘bd2 (and if 13...♗a5, then 14 ♖e3).

12 ♖e1!

'At the board Stein finds an excellent plan, which with the help of some elegant tactical subtleties casts doubts on Black's shaky setup.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) This move was better than 12 ♘c3 ♗f5 13 ♗e3 ♗xc7 14 ♖c1 ♘xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗e4! with the manoeuvre of the bishop to d5 and chances of equalising (Schmid-Nielsen, correspondence 1954/56).

12...♗f5 13 ♘c3 ♖fe8 14 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 15 ♗g5!



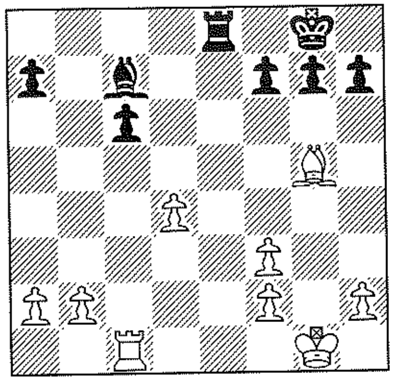
Exploiting the strength of the surviving pawn at c7, White achieves a desirable simplification.

15...♗xf3 (if 15...♕g6, then 16 ♗d8! ♗e7 17 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♕e2! ♕g4 19 g3 or 18...♗xf3 19 ♕xf3 ♖xc7 20 ♖ac1) **16 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17 ♕xf3 ♕xf3**

Not 17...♕xg5? 18 ♕xc6, while 17...♕e6?! 18 ♗e3 ♗xc7 19 ♖c1 ♗b6 20 h3 is also bad for Black. Spassky is hoping to save the rook and bishop ending.

18 gxf3 ♗xc7 19 ♖c1

Thus, White is a healthy pawn to the good, and the whole question is whether he can convert it into a win.



19...♗b6

Proposing to force some pawn exchanges. Black could also have considered the passive 19...♖e6 20 ♗d2 (not 20 d5? on account of 20...♖g6 21 ♖xc6 ♖xg5+ 22 ♔f1 ♗d8, winning) 20...♖d6 or 20 ♗e3 ♗b6 and ...f7-f5 with some chances of a draw.

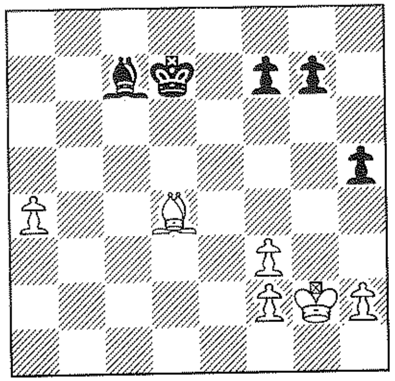
20 ♖xc6 (White avoids 20 ♗e3 ♖e6, transposing into the position just mentioned) **20...♗xd4 21 ♗e3 ♗xb2 22 ♗xa7 ♖e1+** (22...g6!?) **23 ♔g2 ♔f8 24 ♖c7 ♔e8** (24...g6!?) **25 ♗e3 ♖d1 26 a4 ♗d4!**

Enterprising play: Spassky is aiming for a rook endgame, bearing in mind their drawing tendencies.

27 ♗g5! (fearing that his advantage will be squandered after 27 a5 ♗xe3 28 fxe3 ♖a1 29 ♖a7 ♖a3) **27...h6 28 ♗c1 ♗b6 29 ♖c2 ♖d5 30 ♖b2 ♗c7 31 ♗e3 ♔d7 32 ♖b5! ♖d3! 33 ♖b4 h5**

Despite his desperate defence, Black is unable to 'wriggle off the hook'. It was hardly any better to play 33...♔c6 34 ♖g4! ♗e5 (34...g5 35 ♖c4+ ♔b7 36 f4!) 35 ♖c4+ ♔b7 36 f4 (36 ♖b4+!?) 36...♗f6 37 ♔f3 etc.

34 ♖d4+! ♖xd4 35 ♗xd4



35...g6?!

One instinctively wants to place the pawn on a light square, but the immediate 35...g5! was better, hoping for 36 ♗f6?! g4 (36...♗f4? 37 h4! gxh4 38 ♔h3 ♔e6 39 ♗d4 ♔d5 40 ♗e3! ♗e5 41 ♔xh4 and wins) 37 fxg4 hxg4 38 h4 (38 ♗h4 f5, aiming to fix the pawn at f2) 38...gxh3+ 39 ♔xh3 ♔c6! (to the a-pawn as quickly as possible!) 40 ♔g4 (if 40 ♗e7, then 40...♔d5 41 ♔g4 ♔c4 42 ♔f5 ♔b3 43 ♔f6 ♔xa4 44 ♔xf7 ♔b5) 40...♔c5 41 ♗c3 ♔c4! 42 ♗e1 (or 42 ♗d2 ♔d3) 42...♔d3 43 f3 ♔e2 44 ♗b4 ♔e3 (after 44...f5+? 45 ♔xf5 ♔xf3 46 ♔e6 the black king cannot reach a8) 45 ♗c5+ ♔e2 with a positional draw.

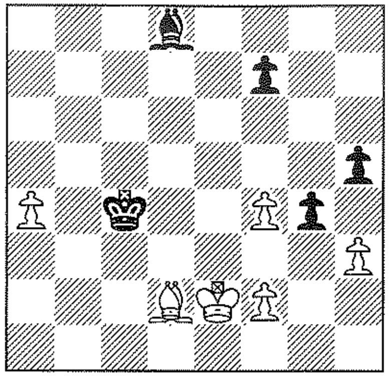
In the few minutes remaining to the time control, Stein would have had to find a subtle, almost study-like way to win: 36 ♗e3! g4 37 fxg4 hxg4 38 h3 gxh3+ 39 ♔xh3 f5 40 f3! (but not 40 ♔h4? f4! 41 ♗d4 f3! 42 ♔g4 ♗a5 43 ♔xf3 ♗e1! and ...♗xf2 with a draw) 40...♗a5 41 ♔h4 ♔e6 42 ♔g5 ♔e5 43 ♗f4+ ♔e6 44 ♔g6 ♗b6 45 ♗d2 ♔e5 46 ♔f7 ♔d4 47 ♔e6 ♔d3 48 ♗g5 ♔c3 49 ♔xf5 ♔b4 50 ♔g4! (50 ♔g6? ♗c7 with a draw) 50...♗c7 (50...♔xa4 51 f4!) 51 ♗f4 ♗d8 52 ♗d2+ ♔xa4 53 f4 ♔b5 54 f5 ♔c6 55 ♗g5 ♗b6 56 f6 ♔d7 57 ♔f5. A very interesting ending!

36 ♗c3 ♔c6 37 h3 ♔c5 38 ♔f1 ♔c4 39 ♗d2 ♗d8 40 ♔e2 g5

What else? 'Otherwise by the advance of his a4-pawn White diverts the black king away from control of the e4-square, moves his king there and forces the f3-f4-f5 breakthrough.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

41 f4! g4

The sealed move. The position is a textbook bishop endgame.



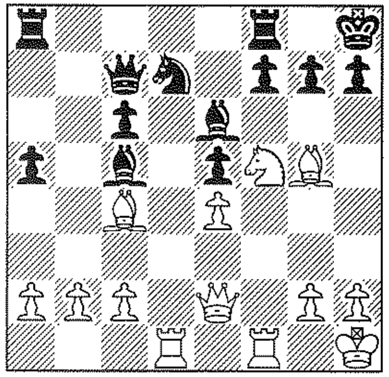
Black resigned without resuming the game. Many considered this premature, but home analysis convinced Spassky that further resistance was hopeless: 42 hxg4 hxg4 43 a5! ♔d5! (43...♔b5 44 ♔d3 ♗h4 45 ♗e1 f5 46 ♔d4, breaking through to the black pawns) 44 a6! (not 44 ♔d3? f5! 45 a6 ♔c6 46 ♗e3 ♗a5!! 47 ♔c4 ♗e1 48 a7 ♔b7 49 ♔d5 g3 50 fxg3 ♗xg3 with a draw) 44...♔c6 45 f5! ♗h4 (45...♔b6? 46 ♗a5+!) 46 ♗e3 g3 47 fxg3 ♗xg3 48 ♔f3 ♗e5 49 ♔e4 ♗g7 50 a7 ♔b7 51 ♔d5 ♗f8 52 ♗f2! ♗e7 53 ♗c5 ♗g5 54 ♔d6 and wins.

Thus the debutant immediately gained a bronze medal in the national championship, a grandmaster norm, and a qualifying place to the Interzonal tournament. The fact that a bright new star had appeared on the chess horizon was confirmed in the USSR Team Cup at the end of 1961, where Stein spectacularly crushed the great Tal in a Sicilian Defence.

At the Interzonal tournament in Stockholm (January-March 1962) Stein for the first time experienced the effect of the discriminatory 'Botvinnik rule': FIDE permitted no more than five representatives of one country (i.e. the USSR) into the eight-man Candidates tournament, and since two places were already taken by Tal and Keres, only three of the six vacancies were available for the four Soviet participants in the Interzonal.

Initially it seemed obvious that the 'odd man out' of the four would be Stein: the debutant began with 2 out of 7. But then he made an amazing spurt – 11½ out of 14! See how he dealt with one of his potential rivals.

Game 58
L.Stein-L.Portisch
Interzonal Tournament,
Stockholm 1962, 12th round



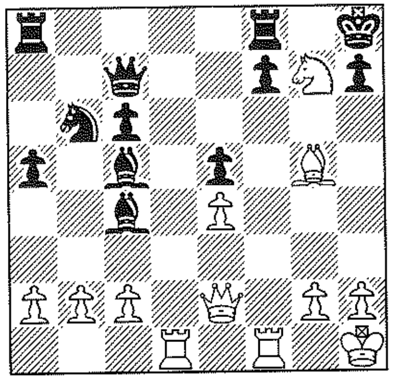
Gradually increasing his initiative, White has built up powerful pressure, and Portisch decided to simplify the position:

18...♘b6?

Overlooking the opponent's murderous reply. 'What can Black do? In the event of 18...♗xc4 19 ♕xc4 f6 20 ♗h4 ♗b6 21 ♖d6 he has a dismal position.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) It would appear that 20 ♗c1! ♗b6(a7) 21 b3 and ♗a3 is even better.

Typical panic on the ship! Although one doesn't want to leave his opponent with a strong light-squared bishop, Black would still have retained a quite defensible position after the cold computer move 18...♗xf5! and ...f7-f6.

19 ♘xg7!! (a knock-out!) **19...♗xc4**



20 ♗f6! ♗e7 21 ♕f3 1-0

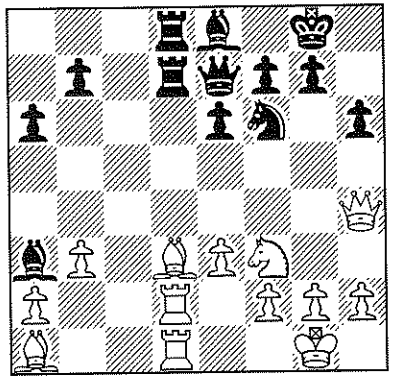
It was not often that such a battle-hardened fighter as Portisch lost in 21 moves!

And in his game with one of the leading American grandmasters of those times, Leonid demonstrated his unusual vision of the board, his ability to find latent resources in a position literally out of nothing.

Game 59

A.Bisguier-L.Stein

Interzonal Tournament,
Stockholm 1962, 15th round

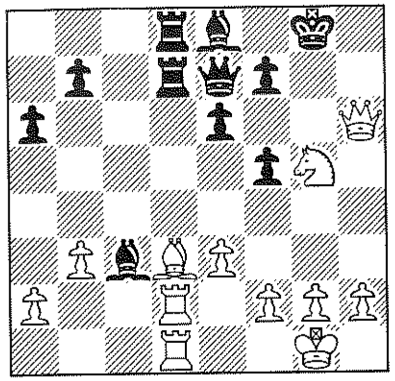


22...♗b4!?

White has modestly simplified the position, not objecting to a draw, when suddenly Black provokes the enemy fire!

23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♕xh6 f5 25 ♘g5 (with the threat of ♕h7+ and ♕h8 mate; 25 ♘e5? ♗xd2!) **25...♗c3!!**

An amazingly bold idea. Having defended the h8-square, Black is threatening to play ...♕f6 and then exploit the mortal pin on the d-file.



26 h4?

White is rattled. It was still possible to maintain the balance by 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♕h6+! ♗g7 28 ♕h4! ♕c5! (with the threat of ...♖xd3) 29 ♕g3 ♖xd3 30 ♘h7+ ♔g8 31 ♘f6+ (Moiseev) or 29 ♕h5 ♕b4 30 ♕e2 e5 31 e4 ♗h6 32 ♕h5 ♗xg5 33 ♕h8+ ♔e7 34 ♕xe5+ ♔f8 35 ♕h8+ with perpetual check.

26...♕f6! 27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 28 ♕h5 ♕h8!? (more elegant than the crude 28...♔e7) **29 ♘h7+** (29 ♕xh8+ ♗xh8 was no better) **29...♔g8 30 ♕g5+ ♕g7!** (30...♔xh7 31 ♗xf5+!) **31 ♖c2 ♕xg5 32 ♘xg5 ♖xd3 0-1**

Before the final, 23rd round Stein was behind only Fischer, Geller and Petrosian. But alas, by losing in a sharp skirmish to Olafsson, he allowed Filip to pass him and, more importantly, also Korchnoi. And although he shared 6th-8th places, as the fourth player from the same country, his way into the Candidates was closed. Nevertheless, there in Stockholm FIDE conducted one of the most absurd competitions in the history of chess – an additional three-man match-tournament for sixth place: 1. Stein – 3 out of 4; 2. Benko – 2½; 3. Gligoric – ½. The player who qualified for the Candidates was... Benko! And Stein became merely the first reserve in the event of any of the Soviet participants dropping out.

However, this cruel twist of fate was by no means the most terrible in his career. Leonid was only 27 years old, he had achieved the grandmaster norm and he was fully aware of his enormous chess strength.

Incidentally, following the example of Geller, Stein met Fischer in Stockholm and became friendly with him. In their free time they frequently played blitz, with alternating success. According to Geller, Bobby was staggered after losing the first two games: who is this Mr Stein? And in the end Bobby was filled with genuine respect for him...

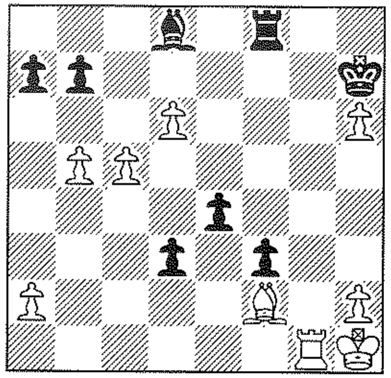
Not without reason, Stein was called the 'second Tal' at that time. To that pair I would also add Spassky. This trio went beyond the bounds of Botvinnik-Smyslov harmony, expanding the limits of our understanding of the game, changing our impressions of the correlation of material and quality of position, of situations with disrupted material and strategic balance – and created the grounds for the emergence of modern, ultra-dynamic chess. These new developments were also sharply advanced by Fischer. But, figuratively speaking, whereas Fischer's weapon was strangulation or the cudgel, these three musketeers were virtuoso swordsmen, who also hurled daggers and fired from the crossbow. With this trio intuition played the main role! Fischer revered rules, whereas for them it was exceptions, paradoxes.

The following example of Stein's sparkling play vividly recalls the famous game McDonnell-La Bourdonnais (*Volume 1, Game No.1*). In this King's Indian duel the advantage was first with White, then with Black, and in a very sharp time scramble it again passed to White. An uncommonly picturesque ending arose. Having abandoned keeping a record of the moves, the two players did not notice that the time control at move 40 had been reached, and continued playing at blitz tempo for several more moves.

Game 60

S.Gligoric-L.Stein

Yugoslavia-USSR Match, Lvov 1962



43 ♗e3?

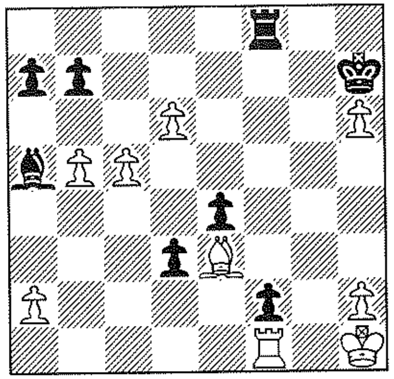
In his haste Gligoric misses a chance to shown that his pawns are stronger: 43 c6! bxc6 44 bxc6. Here Gufeld and Lazarev, and after them Notkin in *ChessBase*, give 44...♗b6 45 c7?? ♗xf2?? 46 d7 and wins, overlooking that after 45...e3! 46 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 47 d7 f2 48 ♖f1 ♖g8! 49 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 50 h4 ♖g1+! 51 ♔h2 ♗g3+ 52 ♔xg1 ♗xc7 it is not White who wins, but Black, whereas in fact 45 ♗xb6! axb6 46 c7 f2 47 d7 is decisive.

It is easy to check that Black is unable to defend with 44...d2 45 ♖d1, and 44...♗a5 or 44...♖f6 on account of 45 c7 ♗xc7 46 dxc7, and 44...♗f6 (recommended by Notkin) 45 ♗e3! ♗e5 46 d7 d2 (46...♔h8 47 ♗c5 ♖d8 48 ♗d4! or even 47 ♗d4) 47 ♗xd2 ♗d4 48 ♖g7+! ♗xg7 49 hxg7 ♔xg7 50 ♔g1! e3 51 ♗xe3 ♖d8 52 ♗g5, winning.

Now, however, the position has become much more complicated. At this point the game was finally adjourned and Stein, after some thought, sealed his move.

43...f2! 44 ♖f1 ♗a5!

The brilliant fruits of adjournment analysis. 'Gligoric underestimated this move, having mainly considered 44...♖f6 with the aim of not allowing the creation of two connected passed pawns. Then nothing is given by 45 ♔g2 on account of 45...♖g6+, when 46 ♔xf2?? allows 46...♗h4 mate *(or 46 ♔h3 ♖xh6+ 47 ♗xh6 ♔xh6 48 c6 bxc6 49 bxc6 e3 50 c7 e2 51 ♔g2 ♗xc7 52 dxc7 d2!, in memory of La Bourdonnais – G.K.)*. But 45 h4! was possible, then h4-h5 and ♔g2.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)



45 c6?

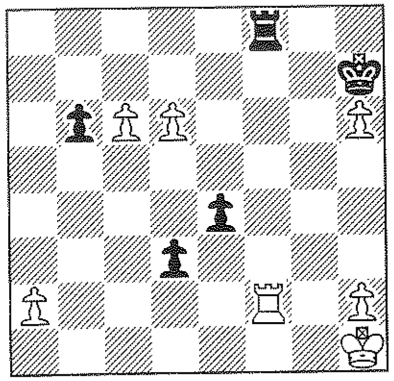
'One can understand Gligoric: it is hard to believe that such a powerful advance not only fails to win, but even throws away the draw! The correct move was 45 d7! ♗d8! (not 45...d2? 46 ♗xd2 ♗xd2 47 ♖xf2!) 46 ♔g2 ♖g8+ 47 ♔h3 ♖f8! with a draw by repetition.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) True, if 48 ♔g4 it is not possible to repeat moves (48...♖f8+? 49 ♔f4), but after 48...♗c7 Black has a fortress: 49 a4 ♖f7 50 c6 bxc6 51 bxc6 a5 52 ♗g5 ♖f8 53 h3(h4) ♖f7 etc.

Perhaps it is better to play 45 ♔g2!? d2 46 c6! (46 ♗xf2 ♖g8+ 47 ♔h3 ♖f8 with a draw, Notkin) 46...bxc6 47 bxc6 ♖g8+ 48 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 49 ♔e2 ♖xf1 50 ♗xd2, but here too after 50...♖f6! 51 c7 ♗xc7 52 dxc7 ♖c6 53 ♗f4 ♖c4 Black gains a draw.

45...bxc6 46 bxc6 ♗b6! 47 ♗xb6 (the motif 47 c7 ♗xe3 and ...♖g8! has already been seen in the note to White's 43rd move)

47...axb6 48 ♖xf2!

The last illusion.

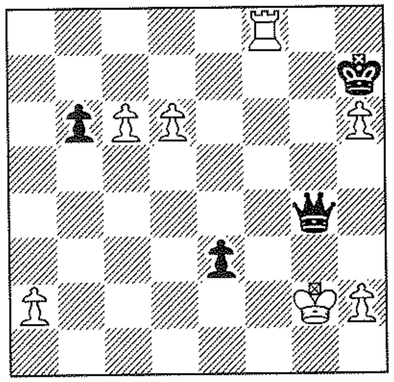


48...e3!!

An amazingly beautiful, paradoxical move, especially against the background of a prosaic win – 48...♖xf2 49 d7 d2 50 d8♕ ♖f1+ 51 ♔g2 d1♕ 52 ♕e7+ ♔xh6 53 ♕e6+ ♔g7 54 ♕e7+ ♖f7 55 ♕e5+ ♖f6 56 ♕e7+ ♔g6 57 ♕xe4+ ♔f7, avoiding perpetual check.

49 ♖xf8 d2 50 c7 d1♕+ 51 ♔g2 ♕g4+

(now only accuracy is required of Black)



52 ♔f1 ♕c4+ 53 ♔g2 e2 54 ♔f2 ♕e6 55 ♔e1 ♕xd6 56 ♖h8+ ♔g6 57 ♖g8+ ♔h5 0-1

In the 30th USSR Championship (Erevan 1962) Stein finished only sixth (+8-4=7), but he again defeated Spassky, for whom he became a difficult, uncomfortable opponent over the next few years.

The following national championship (1963) was for the first time a qualifying event not to the Interzonal, but merely to a double-round Zonal tournament. The Soviet Federation made life difficult for the chess elite, by deciding to stage a special event, to which were admitted the top six from the USSR Championship, ex-world champion Smyslov and 'an outstanding grandmaster, who was either unable to participate in the championship, or performed badly in it' (who turned out to be Korchnoi).

Stein began the championship with eight draws, but then managed a wonderful spurt (8 out of 10!) and was the sole leader going into the last round. But here he suddenly lost to Bagirov – and was caught by Spassky and Kholmov. The championship finished on 27th December, and the Zonal tournament was due to start as soon as 18th February. Nevertheless from 7th-17th January an additional three-man match-tournament for the title of USSR Champion was held in Moscow.

The outcome of this exhausting event, in which Spassky was considered the favourite, was largely determined by the following game.

Game 61

B.Spassky-L.Stein

Match-Tournament for the title of USSR
Champion, Moscow 1964, 1st round
Grünfeld Defence D86

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5

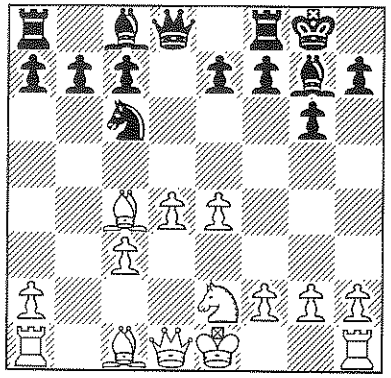
Stein's second opening after the King's Indian Defence – also with the bishop at g7 and counterattacking possibilities!

4 cxd5

A month earlier in the USSR Championship the two players had tested 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗g5 ♘e4 6 cxd5 ♘xg5 7 ♘xg5 e6 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 ♕e3+ ♔f8 10 ♕f4 ♗f6 11 h4 c6 12 0-0-0 h6 13 ♘f3 ♔g7 14 e3 ♗e6 15 ♗d3 ♘d7 16 g4 ♕b8! (Stein's patent – the key method of defence in this variation) with equality.

4...♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 0-0 (7...c5 – *Game Nos.70 and 79*) **8 ♘e2 ♘c6**

Simagin's idea.

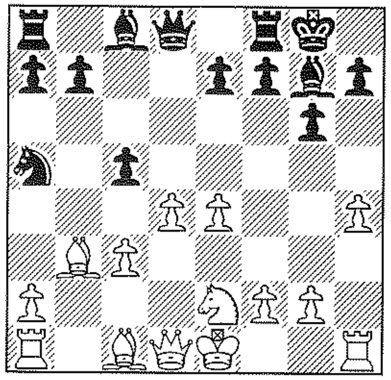


9 h4?!

This risky attack was a favourite weapon of the young Spassky. Shortly afterwards in the Zonal tournament both he and Geller preferred the variation 9 ♗e3 (9 0-0!?) 9...♘a5 10 ♗d3 b6 11 0-0 c5 against Stein, when Black had no particular opening problems.

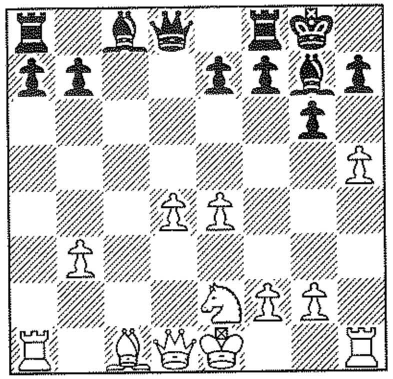
9...♘a5 10 ♗b3

It is unfavourable to play 10 ♗d3 c5 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘c6 13 e5 ♕a5+ 14 ♔f1?! (14 ♕d2) 14...♖d8 15 h5 ♗e6 (Spassky-Sajtar, Bucharest 1953). But it is better to try the immediate 11 h5 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♘c6 13 hxg6 hxg6 (Shabalov-Yandemirov, Leningrad 1989) 14 ♗h6!? ♗xh6 15 ♖xh6 ♘xd4 16 ♕d2 e5! with a sharp struggle (Yandemirov).



10...c5

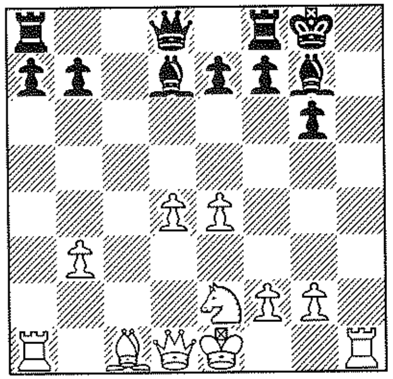
11 h5 (if 11 dxc5, then 11...♕c7 12 ♗e3 ♖d8) **11...♘xb3 12 axb3** (another harmless idea is 12 ♕xb3 cxd4 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 cxd4 ♗g4! 15 f3 ♗e6 Berliner-Benko, New York 1962/63) **12...cxd4 13 cxd4**



13...♗d7!

A novelty! 'A recommendation by Kutyanin and Estrin, the authors of a monograph on the Grünfeld Defence (1959). By creating the threat of ...♗b5, Black achieves comfortable play. In the game Spassky-Suetin (25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958) after 13...♗g4? 14 f3 ♗d7 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♗e3 ♗b5 17 ♘c3 ♕d7 18 ♕d2 he ended up in a difficult position, since f2-f3 is a useful move for White in view of the possibility of ♔f2.' (Stein)

14 hxg6 hxg6!



'Not fearing the opening of the h-file. A more timid player might have played 14...fxg6? and ended up in an inferior position.' (Simagin) But now doubts are cast on White's entire plan: his threats on the h-file are ephemeral.

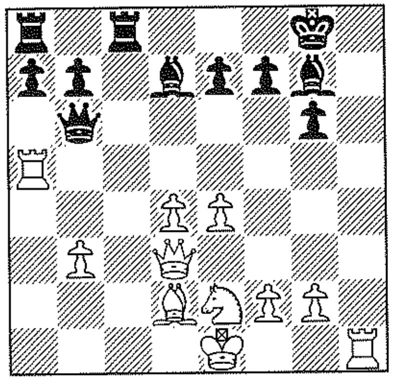
15 ♕d3?!

'A committing move, made after lengthy reflection. 15 ♗e3 was preferable.' (Stein) '15 ♗h6 ♗xh6 16 ♖xh6 suggests itself, but it would have rebounded on White after 16...♔g7 17 ♕d2 ♖h8,' add Gufeld and Lazarev, who probably had in mind 18 ♖xh8 ♕xh8 19 ♘g3 ♕h2!

15...♕b6! 16 ♗d2

Stein thought that White was obliged to play 16 ♕g3, but after 16...♖fc8! (Spassky also did not like the quiet 16...f5 17 e5 ♗b5 and ...♖fd8) 17 ♕h4 ♖xc1+! 18 ♖xc1 ♕b4+ 19 ♔f1 (but not Stein's recommendation 19 ♖c3? in view of 19...♖c8) 19...♗b5 Black has a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed exchange.

16...♖fc8 17 ♖a5

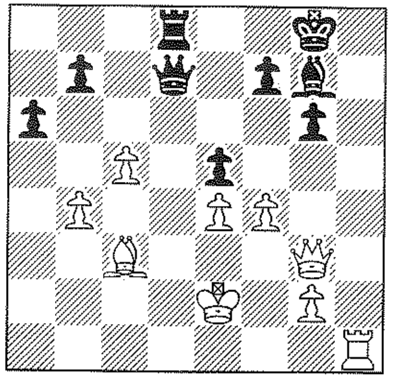


'The aim of this unusual manoeuvre is to prevent ...♗b5 and to play 0-0, while if Black spends a tempo on ...a7-a6, White can block the c-file, from where his king faces the main dangers.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

17...a6! 18 ♖c5! ♖xc5 19 dxc5 ♕c7 20 ♗c3 e5 (avoiding the exchange of the important bishop at g7) **21 b4 ♖d8 22 ♕g3?**

It is now clear that White's venture has failed, but Spassky continues to seek adventures, not wishing to wage a cheerless struggle for a draw after 22 0-0 ♗b5 23 ♕e3 ♕e7!, but not 23...♖d3 24 ♕g5 b6? 25 cxb6 ♕xb6 on account of the pretty 26 ♗xe5! ♗xe5 27 ♕xe5 ♖d2 28 ♖c1! ♗d7 29 ♖e1 or 29 ♕c7 ♕xb4 30 ♕c3 with equality.

22...♗b5 23 f4? (an irreparable weakening) **23...♕d7** (the start of a decisive counter-attack) **24 ♔f2 ♗xe2 25 ♔xe2**



25...a5!

A logical 'human' move, breaking up the white pawns. It was also not bad to play 25...♕a4 (Gufeld, Lazarev) or the more complicated 25...♕b5+ 26 ♔f2 ♖d3 27 ♕h4 ♖xc3 28 ♕d8+ ♗f8 29 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 30 ♕xf8+ ♔h7 31 ♕xf7+ ♔h6 32 ♕f8+ ♔h5 33 ♕h8+ ♔g4 34 ♕xe5 ♖c2+ 35 ♔g1 ♖xg2+! (but not Stein's suggestion 35...♖c1+ 36 ♔h2 ♖h1+ 37 ♔xh1 ♕f1+ 38 ♔h2 ♕xf4+ 39 ♕xf4+ ♔xf4 40 ♔h3 ♔xe4 41 ♔g4 with drawing chances) 36 ♔xg2 ♕e2+ 37 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕d2+! 39 ♔h1 ♔f3 40 ♕g5 ♕c1+, transposing into a won pawn endgame.

26 ♔f2 (White fails to save the game by 26 bxa5 exf4 27 ♕h3 ♕b5+, or 26 ♕h4 ♕d3+ 27 ♔f2 ♕c2+, or 26 ♕h3 ♕b5+ 27 ♔e1 ♕c4! etc.) **26...axb4 27 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 28 fxe5 ♕d4+**

28...♕d2+! 29 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 30 ♔h2 ♔g7 was simpler.

29 ♔f3 (29 ♕e3 ♕xe5 and ...♖d4!) **29...♕d3+ 30 ♔f4 ♕d2+ 31 ♔g4** (31 ♕e3 g5+!) **31...♖d4! 32 ♖f1 ♖xe4+ 33 ♔h3 ♕h6+ 0-1**

The accuracy with which Stein refuted his formidable opponent's idea, is impressive.

Thus for the first time Leonid won the USSR Championship gold medal: 1. Stein – 2½ out of 4; 2. Spassky – 2; 3. Kholmov – 1½. But still to come was the double-round 'eight-man battle' for the four places in the Interzonal tournament. The senseless, humiliating character of the qualifying system became especially apparent when, by the will of the Soviet authorities, one of the places was given to Smyslov without playing. The remaining 'magnificent seven' – all grandmasters of the highest class – now had to fight for just three qualifying places.

The worn-out heroes of the recent national championship made a very hesitant start: Stein began with three draws, and Spassky with a draw and two defeats. In the 4th round they met each other and, of course, both were eager to win. Bondarevsky, reassured his friends: 'Today will be the turning-point. Boris is bound to win. This cannot go on any longer!' But things turned out differently. This famous game made an important contribution to the theory of the Marshall counterattack.

Game 62
L.Stein-B.Spassky
Zonal Tournament,
Moscow 1964, 4th round
Ruy Lopez C89

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♖xe5 c6!

The outpost at d5 plays an important role in the development of Black's initiative. 11...♘f6 is inferior, as Marshall played against Capablanca (*Volume 1, Game No.86*), or 11...♘b6 12 d4 ♗d6 13 ♗g5! ♕d7 14 ♖e1 ♗b7 15 ♘d2 ♖ae8 16 ♗h4 (Bertok-Stein, Stockholm Interzonal 1962).

12 d4

Soon afterwards other ways also began to be tried: 12 ♗xd5 cxd5 13 d4 ♗d6 14 ♖e3 ♕h4 15 h3 ♕f4!? 16 ♖e5 ♕f6 17 ♖e1 ♕g6 18 ♕f3 ♗e6! 19 ♗f4 ♗xf4 20 ♕xf4 ♗xh3 with equality (Tal-Spassky, 7th matchgame, Tbilisi 1965), or 12 g3, as Fischer played against O'Kelly (Havana 1965) and Spassky (Santa Monica 1966), when 12...♗d6 13 ♖e1 ♕d7 14 d4 ♕h3 is possible, transposing into a position from the game, while 14 d3 ♕h3 15 ♖e4 leads to a modern day *tabiya*.

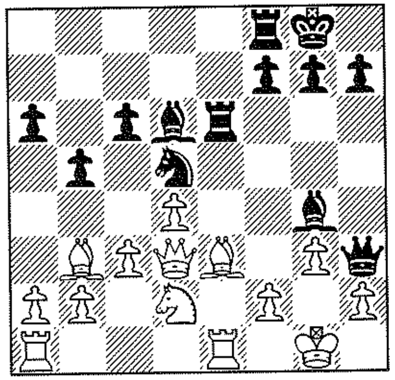
12...♗d6 13 ♖e1 ♕h4 14 g3 ♕h3 15 ♗e3

If 15 ♖e4 (Tal-Stein, Moscow 1967) Black has 15...g5! 16 ♕e2 (16 ♕f3 ♗f5 with equality) 16...f5 17 ♗xd5+ cxd5 18 ♖e6 f4! 19 ♖xd6 ♗g4 20 ♕f1 ♕xf1+ 21 ♔xf1 ♖ae8 22 ♗d2 ♗h3+ 23 ♔g1 fxg3 24 hxg3 ♖e2 with equality (Ponomariov-Anand, Linares 2002).

15...♗g4 16 ♕d3 ♖ae8!

Things are more difficult for Black after 16...♘xe3 17 ♖xe3, as shown by the games Spassky-Geller (2nd matchgame, Riga 1965) and Fischer-Donner (Havana 1965; Santa Monica 1966).

17 ♘d2 ♖e6



This is one of the main positions in the Marshall Attack. The two players had made these moves in just one minute. But here Stein thought for 52 minutes! Remembering two games from the recent USSR Championship (1963) – 18 a4 bxa4!? (a novelty) 19 ♖xa4 f5 20 f4? ♗xf4! 21 ♗f2? (it was more tenacious to play 21 gxf4 ♖g6!) 21...♖xe1+ 22 ♗xe1 ♖e8 0-1 (Novopashin-Spassky) and 18 ♕f1 ♕h5 19 a4 bxa4 20 ♖xa4 f5 21 c4?! (Suetin-Geller), he was intending to follow the second of these, where he had prepared the improvement 21 f4!, when he suddenly noticed 19...♗h3! 20 ♕e2 ♗g4 21 ♕d3 ♗f5 with a draw. Thus he had to change the move order.

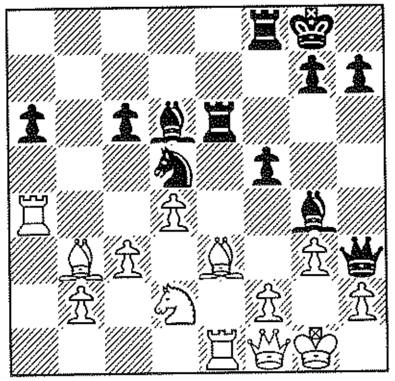
18 a4 bxa4

The following year an improvement appeared: 18...♕h5! 19 axb5 axb5 20 c4?! bxc4 (20...♘xe3!?) 21 ♘xc4 ♗b4 22 ♖ec1 ♗e2 with equality (Tal-Spassky, 1st matchgame, Tbilisi 1965). Today this is still considered the best defence, for example: 20 ♘e4 ♗f5! 21 ♗d2 ♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♘f6 23 f3 ♕g6! 24 ♕f1 ♘xe4 25 fxe4 ♗xe4 with level chances (Svidler-Kamsky, Groningen 1995).

In addition, Tal and Gutman analysed 18...f5 in detail, which leads to a position that could also have occurred in the present game (cf. the note to Black's 20th move) after 19 ♕f1 ♕h5 20 f4 bxa4 21 ♖xa4.

19 ♖xa4 f5 20 ♕f1!

Instead of 20 f4?



20...f4?!

'Sensing something bad, Spassky is the first to deviate from the familiar path.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) Even so, 20...♕h5 was possible, not fearing either 21 ♖xa6 f4! 22 ♗xf4 (Ivanchuk-Short, Riga 1995) 22...♖xe1 23 ♕xe1 ♗xf4 with equality, or 21 f4!, which later became the main continuation in both over-the-board and correspondence play. From the mass of variations, we shall pick out the following:

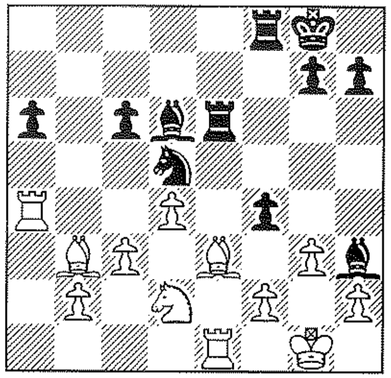
1) 21...g5?! 22 ♖xa6 gxf4 23 ♖xc6?! fxg3! 24 hxg3 (if 24 ♕g2, then 24...♔h8 25 ♗xd5 ♗h3! 26 ♕e2(f3) ♗g4 with equality) 24...f4! 25 ♗xf4 (25 ♗xd5? fxe3 26 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♕e2 exd2 28 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 29 ♖xd6 d1♕! and wins, Lilienthal) 25...♗xf4 26 ♖exe6 ♗xd2 27 ♕g2 ♗f3 28 ♕h2 ♕g5 29 ♕f2 ♕h5 with equality, or 23 ♗xf4! ♗xf4 (Tal-Geller, 43rd USSR Championship, Erevan 1975) 24 ♖xe6! ♗xd2 25 ♗xd5 cxd5 26 ♕g2! f4 (26...♗g5 27 ♕xd5) 27 ♕xd2 ♗xe6 (if 27...fxg3, then White has the powerful 28 ♖f6! ♖e8 29 hxg3 ♖e2 30 ♕h6 ♖e1+ 31 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 32 ♔xf1 ♕f5+ 33 ♕f4 ♕d3+ 34 ♔g1 ♕xa6 35 ♕xg4+) 28 ♖xe6 fxg3 29 ♖e2! (apart from 29 hxg3), calmly converting the pawn advantage;

2) 21...♖b8?! 22 ♗xd5 cxd5 23 ♖xa6! ♖be8 (it is hardly any better to play 23...♖xb2 24 ♕g2! ♖b5 25 c4 or 23...♕e8 24 ♗f2 ♕d7 25 ♖xe6 ♕xe6 26 b3) 24 ♕b5! ♕f7 25 h3! ♗h5?! (25...♗xh3 26 ♘f3 h6 27 ♘e5 ♗xe5 28 ♖xe6! and 29 dxe5 is more tenacious) 26 ♕xd5... 1-0 (Short-Pinter, Rotterdam 1988);

3) 21...♖fe8 (Konstantinopolsky) 22 ♕f2! (Gufeld and Lazarev recommend 22 ♖xa6, ignoring 22...♖xe3! 23 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 24 ♖xc6 ♕e8 25 ♗xd5+ ♔f8 26 ♖xd6 ♖e1! or 26 ♘e4 fxe4! 27 ♖xd6 ♖d3! with equality) 22...g5 (22...♔h8!?) 23 fxg5!? (23 ♖xa6 is unclear after 23...gxf4 24 gxf4 ♔h8 25 ♗xd5 cxd5 26 ♘f1 ♖g8 or 26...♗h3 27 ♘g3 ♕g4 28 ♖aa1 h5 Sanakoev-Boey, World Correspondence Championship 1994) 23...f4 24 gxf4 ♗h3 25 ♘c4! ♗xf4 26 ♘e5 ♗xe5 27 dxe5 ♖xe5 28 ♕g3! ♕xg5 29 ♖xa6 ♕xg3+ 30 hxg3 ♗e6 31 ♗f2 ♖xe1+ 32 ♗xe1 ♘c7! 33 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 34 ♖a1 ♖e2 35 b4 and Black faces a struggle for a draw;

4) 21...♔h8!? 22 ♗xd5 (not 22 ♘c4?! ♗xf4! 23 ♗xf4 ♘xf4 24 ♖xe6 ♘h3+! 25 ♔g2 ♘g5! 26 ♕f2 ♗f3+ with a dangerous attack, Milvidas-Muravyev, Correspondence 1994) 22...cxd5 23 ♖xa6 ♖fe8 24 ♕f2 g5! 25 ♖aa1 (Gufeld and Lazarev suggest 25 fxg5 f4? 26 gxf4 and wins, overlooking 25...♗xg3!, while 25 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 26 fxg5 ♖de6! is also questionable) 25...h6! (Black fails to equalise by 25...gxf4 26 ♗xf4! ♖e2 27 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 28 ♕xe2 ♗xe2 29 ♗xd6 ♗d3 30 ♖e1!) and White's two extra pawns are not felt: 26 b3 ♗h3! 27 ♘f1 (27 ♘f3?! gxf4!) 27...♕g4 28 fxg5 (28 c4 gxf4) 28...hxg5 29 c4 f4! or 26 ♘b3 (threatening ♘c5-d3) 26...gxf4! 27 ♗xf4 ♖e2 28 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 29 ♕xe2 ♗xe2 30 ♗xd6 ♗c4! and ...♕e2 with a draw.

21 ♕xh3 (of course, not 21 gxf4?! ♖g6 or 21 ♗xf4?! ♕xf1+ 22 ♖xf1 ♗xf4 23 gxf4 ♗h3! Bondarevsky) **21...♗xh3**



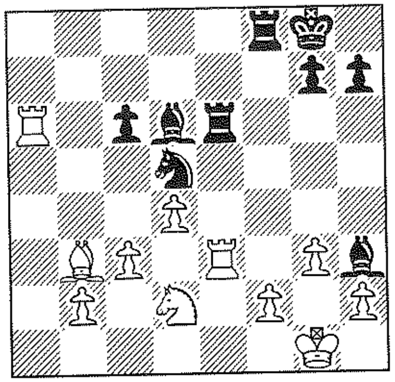
22 ♖xa6!

'A deeply calculated piece sacrifice, fully stemming from the features of the position.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

22...fxe3 (it is inferior to play 22...♖c8 23 ♖ea1 fxe3 24 fxe3 ♖xe3 25 ♖xc6!, or 22...♔h8 23 ♖xc6 fxe3 24 fxe3 ♗xg3 25 hxg3 ♖xc6 26 ♗xd5 ♖g6 27 ♗e4! and wins) **23 ♖xe3**

'After 23 fxe3 ♗e7 24 ♖xc6! (24 e4 ♗g5!) 24...♖xc6 25 ♗xd5+ ♖e6 White has four connected passed pawns for the piece, but Black's bishops are dangerous and therefore he would have stood better.' (Bondarevsky)

However, the computer does not agree with this, evaluating the position after 26 e4! as clearly advantageous to White. In the light of a later discovery (cf. the note to White's 25th move), this line deserves closer attention. The machine's evaluation is, of course, purely mechanical: four pawns, which are all passed, are stronger than a bishop. Whereas a human will hope that after the possible 26...h5 27 ♖a1 (or 27 ♘c4) 27...♔h7 28 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 Black's two bishops and rook will be able to put up a fierce resistance. In short, the position is a playable one, but objectively (if one possesses a computer!) the chances are with White.



23...♖xe3

'Or 23...♘xe3 24 ♖xc6! and Black is forced to return his extra material, remaining with his pawn deficit.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) And indeed, after 24...♖d8?! 25 fxe3 ♔f8 26 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 27 ♘e4 ♔e7 28 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 29 ♘xd6 ♔xd6 30 e4 the pawn avalanche is irresistible.

However, after the 'non-human' move 24...♘f1!! things are far more difficult for White. 25 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 26 ♔xf1 ♗h3+ is unclear, and little is promised by 25 ♖xd6 ♘xd2 26 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♖xe6 ♖b8! 28 b4 ♖c8 29 ♖e3 ♘b1 with a draw, or 25 ♘e4 ♖b8! 26 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♘xd6 (27 ♖xd6 ♗f5!) 27...♘d2 28 b4 (28 ♖a6!? ♔f8 29 b4 ♔e7 or 28...g5!? 29 b4 g4 with sharp play) 28...♘f3+ 29 ♔f1?! (29 ♔g2 ♘xd4 with a draw) 29...♖xb4!! 30 cxb4 ♗h3+ 31 ♔e2 ♘xd4+ and ...♘xc6. Perhaps 25 ♘xf1 ♖d8 26 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♘e3 is the only way to retain some advantage.

It seems to me that after 23...♘xe3?! the best is 24 fxe3!, for example: 24...♖c8 25 ♘e4 ♗e7 26 ♘f2! ♔h8 (26...♖b8 27 ♗c4!) 27 ♘xh3 ♖xe3 28 ♔f2 ♖e4 29 ♘f4 with winning chances, or 24...♔f7 25 ♖xc6 ♔e7 (25...♗e7 26 e4 ♗g5 27 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 28 ♘c4; 26 ♘f3!?) 26 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 27 ♖a6 and White still has his quartet of connected passed pawns.

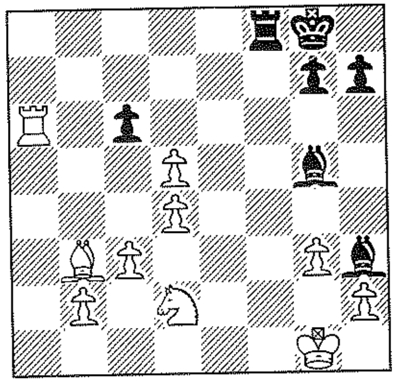
24 fxe3 ♗e7!

But not 24...♖c8? 25 ♖xc6! In a difficult position Spassky finds an excellent chance, enabling Black to create an unexpected counterattack. The most interesting moment of the game is reached.

25 ♖xc6!?

'It is surprising that such a natural move proves not to be the strongest,' write Gufeld and Lazarev, who give the example of a game played the following year, Parma-Spassky (Yugoslavia-USSR match, Vrnjacka Banja 1965): 25 e4 ♗g5 26 exd5 ♗xd2 27 dxc6+ ♔h8 28 ♖a1 g6 29 ♗d5 ♗e3+ 30 ♔h1 ♖f2 31 c7 with a winning advantage. And although Black managed to save himself by some miracle, the variation with 20...f4 was shelved.

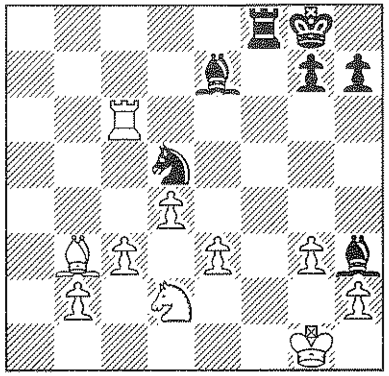
However, instead of the automatic 26...♗xd2? there is a quite phenomenal resource.



Analysis diagram

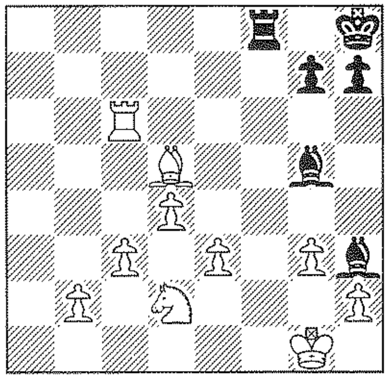
26...c5!! The knight will not run away – it is more important to eliminate the irresistible passed c-pawn. After 27 d6+ ♔h8 28 ♘f3 (28 dxc5? ♗xd2 29 ♗c4 ♗e3+ 30 ♔h1 g5!) 28...♗e3+ 29 ♔h1 g5! 30 ♗c4 (30 ♗d5? g4!) 30...♖xf3! (30...cxd4? 31 ♘xd4 Mann-Kotzem, Correspondence 1981) 31 ♖a8+ ♔g7 32 ♖e8! (32 d7? ♖f2; 32 ♖a7+ ♔g6! 33 ♗d3+ ♗f5 34 ♗xf5+ ♖xf5 35 d7 g4! 36 h3 ♖f1+, or 34 ♖e7 ♗xd3 35 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 36 d7 ♖e1+ 37 ♔g2 ♖e2+ with perpetual check, since 38 ♔f3? is not possible on account of 38...g4+! 39 ♔xg4 ♖f2!!, winning) 32...cxd4 33 d7 ♗xd7 34 ♖e7+ ♔g6 35 ♖xd7 ♖f2! 36 cxd4 ♖xb2 Black gains a draw.

Thus, Stein's intuition did not betray him: the pretty move 25 ♖xc6!? is certainly no worse than 25 e4. But since in neither case does White manage to win, his only hope remained 23 fxe3!? (instead of 23 ♖xe3).



25...♗g5! 26 ♗xd5+ ♔h8

'An amazing position. White has four extra pawns, but he is unable to retain his advantage.' (Bondarevsky)

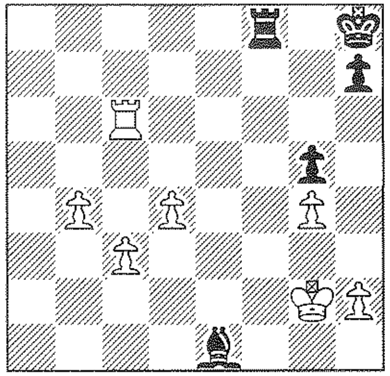


27 ♗g2! (the greedy 27 ♘f3? would have led to disaster: 27...♗xe3+ 28 ♔h1 ♖a8!, winning) **27...♗xe3+ 28 ♔h1 ♗xg2+ 29 ♔xg2 ♗xd2 30 b4 g5!**

A very complicated ending! 'Black makes a "long air vent" for his king and intends to attack with ...g5-g4 and ...♗e3. Since the white king is unable to support the queenside pawns, the chances are roughly equal.' (Bondarevsky)

31 g4 (or 31 h3 ♗e1 32 b5 ♖f2+ 33 ♔g1 ♖c2 with a draw) **31...♗e1**

'A last attempt to play for a win.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) I must dispel a myth here: White is the only one who can think in terms of winning, whereas Black is only thinking of how to give up his bishop for a couple of pawns.



32 d5 ½-½

Or 32 b5 ♖f2+ 33 ♔g1 ♖b2 34 ♔f1 ♗d2 35 c4 ♗f4 36 h3 ♔g8 with a draw (Bondarevsky). With a time scramble imminent, Stein thought it best to offer a draw, and after some thought Spassky agreed.

There could have followed 32...♖d8 33 ♖c5 (33 d6 ♗d2; 33 b5 ♖xd5 34 b6 ♖b5 35 c4 ♖b4) 33...♗d2 (Bondarevsky) 34 h3 (34 ♔f3 ♖e8!?) 34...♔g8 35 ♔f1 ♔f8 36 ♔e2 ♗f4 37 c4 ♖e8+ 38 ♔f1 ♖e3 with a draw. A lively, highly interesting game.

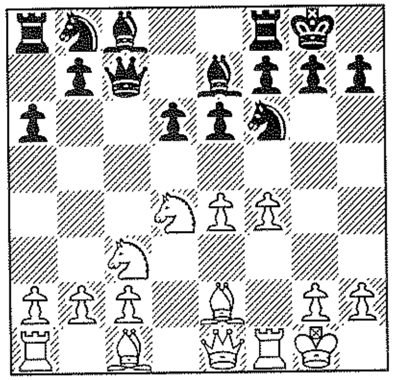
After nine rounds all the participants in the Zonal tournament retained chances of success: Bronstein – 4½ out of 7; Korchnoi, Spassky and Kholmov – 4 out of 8; Stein – 3½ out of 7; Geller and Suetin – 3½ out of 8. In the 10th round Spassky and Stein gained important wins: the former attractively defeated Geller with Black, with a queen sacrifice, while the latter crushed Korchnoi – who at that time was already twice USSR

Champion and a participant in the Candidates tournament in Curaçao (1962) – with White.

Enraptured by his opponent's play, Korchnoi annotated his defeat in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1964 No.6). Unfortunately, this famous game remained unknown, since it did not find its way into the book *Leonid Stein* (after Korchnoi's defection to the West, his name was banned in the USSR). And on the advice of Viktor Vasilievich I have included it in this book.

Game 63
L.Stein-V.Korchnoi
Zonal Tournament,
Moscow 1964, 10th round
Sicilian Defence B84

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 f4 ♕c7 9 ♕e1 0-0



10 ♕g3!?

After 10 ♗e3 b5 11 ♗f3 ♗b7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘fd7 14 ♕g3 ♗xf3 15 ♘xf3 (15 ♕xf3 ♘b6 16 ♖ae1 ♘8d7) 15...♗c5! Black does not experience any problems (Stein-Spassky, USSR Championship play-off, Moscow 1964). It was this that Korchnoi was aiming for, but on this occasion Stein took into account a feature of his opponent's style – to snatch pawns, if no concrete refutation was apparent.

10...♕b6?!

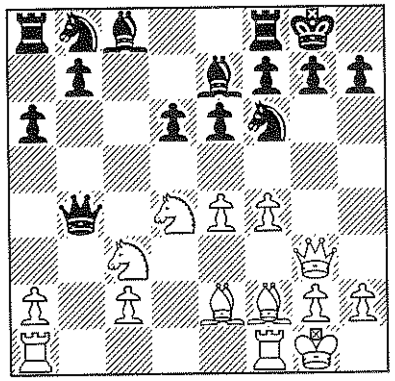
'I decided to accept the pawn sacrifice,' explains Korchnoi, 'since I did not want to play the main line of the Scheveningen Variation – 10...♘c6' (followed by 11 ♗e3 ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 b5 or 11...♗d7).

11 ♗e3 ♕xb2 12 ♗f2

If 12 ♕e1, then 12...♕b6!, not fearing 13 ♘f5 ♕c7 14 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7. Korchnoi also gives 12 ♘a4? ♕b4 13 ♘b6 ♘xe4! and adds: 'A small, but important psychological detail: contrary to his custom, Stein thought for a long time in the opening, and I decided that he must have found the pawn sacrifice at the board. Initially it even seemed to me that Stein had miscalculated. To judge by the further course of the game, I underestimated White's possibilities.'

12...♕b4

The queen's risky journey to win a pawn and then return home has cost Black precious time: 13 ♖fb1 ♕a3 14 ♘d5! was threatened, while if 12...d5?, then 13 a3!, winning.



13 e5!

The tempting pursuit of the queen – 13 ♖ab1 ♕a5 14 ♘f5!? exf5 15 ♗b6 would have led to an unclear position after 15...♘xe4! 16 ♘xe4 ♕xa2 17 ♗d4 (or 17 ♘c3 ♕e6 18 ♗f3 ♘c6 19 ♘d5 ♗d8 Korchnoi) 17...f6 18 ♘c3 ♕f7 19 ♗f3 ♘c6 20 ♗f2 ♔h8. After all, White is now three pawns down.

13...dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘e8

'Also after 14...♘fd7 very accurate play would have been required to achieve equality: 15 ♘d5! *(15 ♘b3 ♗g5! 16 ♗d3 ♗h6 17 ♘e4 ♘c6 is unclear – G.K.)* 15...exd5 16 ♘f5 g6 17 a3! ♗h4! (17...♕e4? 18 ♘xe7+ ♔g7 19 ♗d3 ♕xe5 20 ♘f5+ ♔g8 21 ♗d4 and wins) 18 axb4 (if 18 ♘xh4 ♕e4, and Black is out of danger) 18...♗xg3 19 ♘e7+ ♔g7 20 ♗xg3 ♘b6 21 ♗f2, retaining pressure in the endgame.' (Korchnoi)

For example: 21...♖e8 (Damjanovic-Solak, Vrnjacka Banja 1996) 22 ♗xb6 ♖xe7 23 ♗c5! followed by 23...♖xe5 24 ♗d4 f6 25 ♗xe5 fxe5 26 c4!, 23...♖c7 24 c4!, or 23...♖e8 24 ♗f3 ♘d7 25 ♗xd5 ♘xc5 26 ♖xf7+ ♔h6 27 bxc5 ♖xe5 28 c4. I think that Black made the best practical choice in retreating his knight to e8: it is better to seek counter-chances in a sharp middlegame, than in such an unpromising endgame.

15 ♗d3?!

White's sights are fixed on the enemy king. But Korchnoi rightly comments that 15 ♘b3! came into consideration, when the threat of a2-a3 would have forced 15...♕a3. Modern masters, especially after the 11th game of the Spassky-Fischer match (1972) are also not averse to chasing the queen: 16 ♗e3 ♘c6 17 ♖f4! ♘xe5 (17...♕b2? 18 ♗c1! ♕xc2 19 ♗d3 ♕xc3 20 ♗xh7+ and ♕xc3) 18 ♖a4 ♕b2 19 ♗d4 ♘c6 20 ♖b1 ♕xc2 21 ♗d3 ♗h4 (B.Knezevic-Bistric, Banja Vrucica 1991) 22 ♕f3! ♘xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♗f2+ 24 ♕xf2 ♕xf2+ 25 ♔xf2 with a clear advantage.

16...♘d7!? 17 ♖f4 ♗c5 is also interesting, but here too after 18 ♘xc5! ♕xc3 (18...♘xc5 19 ♗d4!) 19 ♖af1 ♘xc5 (after 19...♘xe5 20 ♗h5! f5 21 ♘e4 ♕c6 22 ♗d4 or 20...♘d6 21 ♕f2 ♘g6 22 ♗d4 ♕a5 23 ♗xg6 hxg6 24 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 25 ♕d4+ ♔g8 26 ♖h4 Black comes under attack) 20 ♖c4 ♘e4 21 ♕f4 (or 21 ♖xc3 ♘xg3 22 hxg3 ♗d7 23 ♖d1! ♗c6 24 ♗c5 and ♗xf8 with chances of converting the extra exchange) 21...♕a5 22 ♕xe4 f5 23 ♕d4 White has solid pressure. Thus overall, despite the error he committed, Stein correctly evaluated the promising nature of the sacrifice of the b2-pawn.

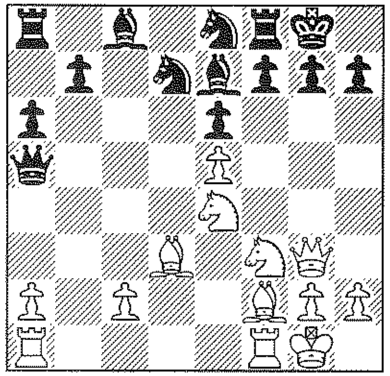
15...♕a5

The queen is included in the defence and also in the attack on the e5-pawn. Black wants to avoid ...f7-f5, especially since 15...f5?! 16 exf6 ♘xf6 17 ♘e4 would have allowed White to continue the transfer of his forces to the kingside.

Korchnoi thought that 15...♘d7 was more accurate, since then neither 16 ♘xe6?! fxe6 17 ♕h3 ♖f5 18 g4 ♕xc3 19 gxf5 ♕xe5, nor 16 ♖ab1 ♕a5 17 ♘xe6?! fxe6 18 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 19 ♕h3+ ♔g8 20 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 21 ♗b6 ♘xe5 would have worked, while after 16 ♘e4 ♘c5 (in my opinion, 16...♕a5 is also acceptable, transposing into a position from the game) 17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♕h3 f5 19 exf6 ♘xf6 the chances are roughly equal. And 16 ♘b3 is no longer effective on account of the thematic 16...f5!

16 ♘e4 ♘d7 17 ♘f3

The first critical moment of the battle.



17...g6?!

In striving to retain a complicated position and practical winning chances, Black significantly weakens his king's fortress. Later Korchnoi regretted that he did not play 17...f5! 18 exf6 ♘dxf6 (it is inferior to play 18...♘exf6?! 19 ♕h3! ♘xe4 20 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 21 ♕xe4 ♘f6 22 ♕e5 ♕xe5 23 ♘xe5 ♖f8 24 ♗c4+ ♔h8 25 ♖ae1 ♗b4 26 ♖b1). Now White would have had to seek compensation for the sacrificed pawn: 19 ♗d4! (not 19 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 20 ♖ae1? ♕xa2 21 ♗d4 ♕d5 22

♕h4 ♗c5! Sigurjonsson-Sax, Amsterdam 1976) 19...♘xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♗c5 21 c3 ♘f6 (21...♕xc3?! 22 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 23 ♕h4) 22 ♘g5! with an initiative, sufficient for not more than a draw.

18 ♗d4 ♘g7

'Or 18...♕d8 19 ♕f4 ♘g7 20 g4 with the threat of ♕h6.' (Korchnoi) After 19...f6 20 ♕h6 fxe5 21 ♘fg5 ♗xg5 22 ♘xg5 ♕e7 23 ♗xe5 ♘ef6 24 ♗g3 White also has unpleasant pressure.

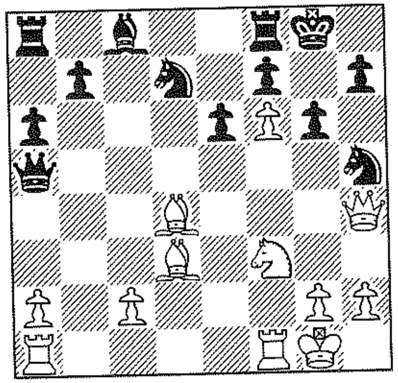
I should add that 18...b5?! 19 ♕h3! ♘g7 (19...b4? 20 ♘eg5; 19...♕d8 20 ♕h6 f6 21 exf6 ♘dxf6?! 22 ♘eg5 e5 23 ♘xh7!) 20 ♘fg5 h5 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 exf6 ♘f5 23 ♗xf5 exf5 24 ♕g3! would have placed Black in a critical position (♖xf5 is not the only threat): 24...♕a4 25 c3 ♕c4 (25...♗b7 26 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 27 ♕c7) 26 ♖fe1! ♘c5 27 ♘xf7!, or 24...♗b7 25 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 26 ♕b3+ ♔e8 27 ♕e6+ ♔d8 28 ♖ad1 with crushing threats.

19 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 20 exf6 ♘h5

In the event of 20...♘f5 21 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 (21...exf5? 22 ♕g5 or 22 ♖fe1, winning) 22 ♘e5 (Korchnoi) 22...♕e4 23 ♖f4 ♕e2 (23...♕xc2? 24 ♕g5) 24 ♖e1 ♕d2 25 ♘f3! ♕a5 26 ♖h4 ♖e8 27 ♘g5 ♘f8 28 ♕e3 White has a decisive attack.

21 ♕h4

The second – and most important – critical moment.



21...♕d8?

The decisive mistake! 'The previously planned 21...e5 did not work in view of 22 ♕g5.' (Korchnoi) And indeed, 22...h6? 23 ♕xh6 exd4 is bad on account of 24 ♗c4! ♘dxf6 25 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♕h6+! ♔g8 27 ♖ae1, or 26...♘h7 27 ♖ae1 ♘5f6 28 ♖e5 ♕c7 29 ♗d3 ♗g4 30 ♘g5! ♕xe5 31 ♖xf6, winning.

However, Black had an astounding defensive resource – 22...♕a4! 23 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 24 ♘xe5 (24 ♕xe5 ♖e8 with equality) 24...♕d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♗f5!, for example:

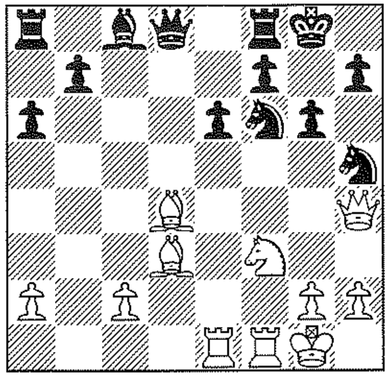
1) 26 ♖ae1. It appears that White is winning: he is threatening ♖xf5, and if 26...♗xd3? 27 cxd3 ♕d5, then 28 ♖e4 ♖fe8 29 g4! But after the unexpected 26...♖ae8! 27 ♖xf5 h6! 28 ♕xh6 (28 ♕d2 gxf5 29 ♕xh6 ♕f4!) 28...♕h4!! the threat of ...♘g3+ forces 29 ♕xh5! ♕xe1+ 30 ♗f1 gxh5 (or 30...♕xf1+ 31 ♖xf1 gxh5 32 ♖f5 with equality) 31 ♖g5+ with perpetual check;

2) 26 ♖ad1! This is more cunning – Black again has to display exceptional resourcefulness: 26...h6! (not 26...♕xe5? 27 ♖xf5 ♕e6 28 ♖df1 ♖fe8 29 g4 and wins) 27 ♕xh6 ♗xd3 28 ♕g5! ♖ae8 29 ♘g4 ♖e4! 30 ♘h6+ ♔h7 31 cxd3 ♕e3 (another interesting idea is 31...♖e6!? 32 ♖f3 ♕e5! 33 ♘f5 ♕xf6 34 ♕h6+ ♔g8 35 g4 gxf5 36 ♕xh5 f4 or 36...♖e2 with good drawing chances) 32 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 33 ♘g4 ♖e2 34 ♖c1 (or 34 a3 ♖d8 35 d4 ♖e4 36 ♘e5 ♔g8 37 ♖c1!? ♖exd4 38 g4 ♘f4 39 ♖c7 ♖d1 etc.) 34...♖xa2 35 ♘e5 ♖e2! 36 d4 ♖e4 37 g4 (37 g3 ♖xd4) 37...♘f4 38 ♖c7 ♔g8 39 ♖xb7 ♖xd4, gaining a draw.

In general, it is harder for humans to find defensive resources than attacking ones. On reaching 24 ♘xe5 in his analysis he gives up calculating and evaluates the position: with level material White has a powerful attack, and the 'wedge' at f6 promises him a better ending. But, as Petrosian once remarked, chess is a game that is hard to predict: you only have to move some unobtrusive pawn one square – and the entire evaluation changes. In the given instance the move ...h7-h6 creates an amazing geometry, refuting our traditional impressions of such positions. This is already a new level of chess understanding – the ultra-accurate play of the computer era.

22 ♖ae1! (not 22 ♘g5?! e5) **22...♘dxf6**

Or 22...♘hxf6 23 ♘g5! A rare instance, when Korchnoi was thoroughly betrayed by his sense of danger: after capturing the f6-pawn, he was hoping gradually to defend himself, but White's attack develops of its own accord.



23 ♘g5

'Possibly even stronger was 23 ♘e5 with the idea of 23...♘d7? 24 ♘xf7! ♕xh4 25 ♘h6 mate.' (Mikenas) And after the improvement 23...♘g4 24 ♕xg4 f5 25 ♘xg6! fxg4 26 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 27 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 28 ♗xh7 Black has a difficult endgame.

23...e5

If 23...♘g4 there would have followed 24 ♗c5 (Korchnoi) 24...♘xh2 25 ♖f4! In addition, 23...h6 would also not have saved Black in view of 24 ♗xf6 hxg5 25 ♗xg5 ♕d6 26 g4.

24 ♗xe5 h6 (24...♘g4? 25 ♕xh5! h6 26 ♕xg6+!) **25 ♗xf6?!**

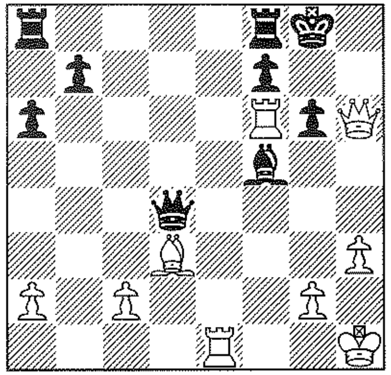
Black's position is tragic. 'Had White played 25 ♖xf6 or 25 ♘xf7, the game would have lasted 15 moves less!' (Korchnoi)

25...hxg5 26 ♕xg5 ♘xf6 27 ♖xf6 ♕d4+ 28 ♔h1 ♕g4 (28...♔g7? 29 ♖xg6+!) **29 ♕h6 ♗f5** (not 29...♕h5? 30 ♖xg6+ fxg6 31 ♗c4+) **30 h3!**

'Stein nevertheless succeeds in creating decisive threats and in concluding the game with a direct attack.' (Korchnoi) Another alternative was the technical 30 ♗xf5 gxf5 31 h3 ♕g7 32 ♕h4!

30...♕d4

Or 30...♕b4 31 ♖e5! ♗xd3 32 cxd3 ♕b1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕xd3 34 ♖g5, and for his two rooks White wins the queen and both kingside pawns.' (Korchnoi)



31 ♖xf5! gxf5 32 ♖e3 ♕g7 33 ♕h4

'The remainder is clear. The black king is forced to set off on its travels, from which it does not return,' writes Korchnoi, as though forecasting his own fate. In fact, a more decisive choice was 33 ♕f4! (with the threat of ♖g3) 33...♕a1+ 34 ♔h2 ♖fe8 35 ♖g3+ ♔f8 36 ♕d6+ ♖e7 37 ♕h6+ or 34...♖fd8 35 ♖g3+ ♔f8 36 ♕b4+.

33...♕a1+ 34 ♔h2 ♖fe8 35 ♖g3+ ♔f8 36 ♕h6+ ♔e7 37 ♖e3+ ♔d7 38 ♗xf5+ ♔c7 39 ♕f4+ ♔c6 40 ♕c4+ ♔d6 (or 40...♔b6 41 ♖b3+) **41 ♕b4+** (the machine prefers 41 ♖d3+ ♔e5 42 ♗d7!) **41...♔d5 42 ♖d3+ ♔e5 43 ♕d6+ ♔xf5 44 ♖f3+ ♔g5 45 ♕f4+** (45 h4+!) **45...♔h5 46 g4+ ♔g6 47 ♕xf7+ 1-0**

Mate is inevitable.

Ultimately, the cherished qualifying places were won by Spassky (7 out of 12), Bronstein and Stein (6½). 'The success of Leonid Stein is no surprise; it is understandable and even necessary,' Vasily Panov wrote soon afterwards. 'It would be unthinkable if the USSR

Champion did not qualify for the Interzonal tournament! He began the Zonal tournament in even more "spectacular" fashion than the championship of the country: five draws and then a zero! And still he finished in the leading three. What confidence and self-control! With such stable nerves and belief in himself, Stein's further successes are assured.' Alas, as we shall see, it was precisely stable nerves that he was lacking...

In the Interzonal tournament that began soon afterwards (Amsterdam 1964) the task of the Soviet participants was even more difficult than it had been two and a half years earlier in Stockholm: for the same three out of six Candidates vacancies, five world-class grandmasters were competing – the winners of the Zonal tournament plus Smyslov and Tal.

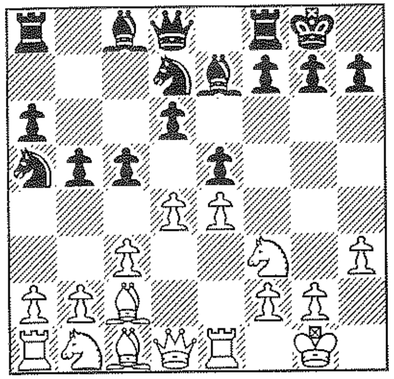
'By tradition' Leonid began sluggishly – 3½ out of 8, but then he made a fantastic spurt – 12 out of 13 (defeating, in particular, Gligoric, Benko, Evans, Ivkov and Larsen!) and burst into the leading group with a score of +10. But human powers are not unlimited... A draw in the penultimate, 22nd round with one of the outsiders was not yet fatal: Stein was sharing 3rd-5th places with Tal and Spassky, half a point behind Smyslov and Larsen. A very tense finish!

On the final day Tal and Spassky won 'to order' and caught up with the leaders, who drew with each other, but Stein was unable to defeat the tenacious Klaus Darga with the white pieces. Here is that half-forgotten game, which has not only historical, but also considerable theoretical importance.

Game 64
L.Stein-K.Darga
Interzonal Tournament,
Amsterdam 1964, round 23
Ruy Lopez C96

1 e4 (perhaps Stein should have chosen his reserve weapon – the closed set-up with g2-g3) **1...e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♘d7!?**

This variation, which Keres introduced in Curaçao (1962), was unusually popular at that time. This position occurred ten times in Amsterdam.



12 b3!?

An interesting 'side' move, which Stein had reserved especially for a decisive game. Against Keres in Curaçao, Fischer played both 12 dxc5 dxc5 13 ♘bd2 (after which Boleslavsky suggested 13...f6 and ...♘b6 with equality, Ivkov-Quinones, Amsterdam, 14th round; later Romanishin successfully employed 13...♗b7!? with the unexpected idea of ...♘c4-d6), and 12 d5, but after 12...♘b6 Black had no problems: 13 g4?! h5! 14 ♘h2 hxg4 15 hxg4 ♗g5! etc.

But the main line is 12 ♘bd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6 14 ♘b3! (14 ♘f1 exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 ♘e5 with equality, Kholmov-Geller, Moscow Zonal 1964 and Spassky-Tal, 4th round; or 14 d5 ♘b4 15 ♗b1 a5 16 a3 ♘a6 with equality, Spassky-Tringov, 2nd round and Suetin-Tal, 32nd USSR Championship, Kiev 1964/65) 14...a5 with two possible continuations:

1) 15 ♗e3 a4 16 ♘bd2!? (16 ♘c1 exd4 Tal-Keres, Curaçao Candidates 1962) 16...♗f6 17 ♘f1 exd4 18 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♗xd4 ♘e5 20 ♘e3 (Gligoric-Tal, 8th round), or 16...exd4 17 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘e5 19 ♘f1 ♗e6!? 20 ♘e3 (Gligoric-Reshevsky, 21st round), in both cases with a minimal advantage for White and... a draw;

2) 15 ♗d3! ♗a6!? (15...♖b8 16 ♗e3 a4 17 d5 ♘b4 18 ♘c1 f5! Suetin-Stein, Moscow Zonal 1964; it stronger to play 16 ♕e2! ♗a6, and against Lengyel in the 15th round Stein played 17 ♗e3 a4 18 ♘bd2 exd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♘e5 with equality, while against Reshevsky Tal played 17 ♗d2! exd4 18 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♘e5 20 ♖ad1 ♕b6 21 ♗e3 with advantage to White) 16 d5!? (16 ♗e3 a4 17 ♘c1 exd4 18 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 19 ♗xd4 ♘e5 20 ♗f1 ♘c6 21 ♗e3 ♗f6 with equality, Smyslov-Lengyel, 17th round, and Geller-Stein, Moscow 1964) 16...♘b4 17 ♗f1 a4 18 a3 ♘xd5 19 ♕xd5 axb3 20 ♗xb5 ♘f6 21 ♕d3 ♗xb5 22 ♕xb5 ♕b8 23 ♕xb8 ♖axb8 24 ♗g5 ♖fc8 with a slightly inferior ending (Ivkov-Pachman, 22nd round).

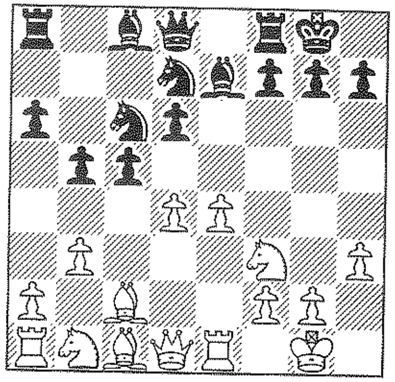
It was only many years later that White found the idea 18 ♘bd4! exd4 19 a3 (Shamkovich-Benjamin, New York 1976), which effectively buried the variation after a spectacular win by Anand over Piket (Wijk aan Zee 1999). And Black began fighting against 12 ♘bd2 with 12...exd4!? 13 cxd4 ♘c6 (the Graf Variation) 14 d5 ♘ce5 (Ponomariov-Belyavsky, Moscow rapidplay 2002, and Anand-Ponomariov, Mainz rapidplay 2002).

Now it will be understandable why Stein decided to deviate. Of the modern attempts I should mention the 'strange' 12 ♔h1!? (Kramnik-Ponomariov, Linares 2003) with the camouflaged positional idea of 12...♖b8?! 13 d5! ♘b6 14 g4 h5 15 ♖g1! But Ponomariov played 12...♗b7 13 d5 f5! 14 exf5 ♘c4 with a sharp struggle.

12...exd4!

Darga intuitively makes the strongest move! After 12...cxd4?! 13 cxd4 ♘c6 14 ♘c3 exd4 (14...♘b4 15 ♗b1) 15 ♘d5! ♘de5 (15...♗f6 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 ♗g5) 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 White achieves an appreciable advantage: 17...♗f6 18 ♔h1! (Kasparov-Ponomariov, Moscow rapidplay 2002), or 17...♗xh3 18 f4! ♘c6 19 ♕c3 ♗d7 20 ♗b2 f6 21 ♖ad1 (21 ♕d3!?) 21...♖c8 22 ♕d3 ♗g4 23 ♖d2 ♖e8 24 b4 (Ivanchuk-Iuldachev, Hyderabad 2002).

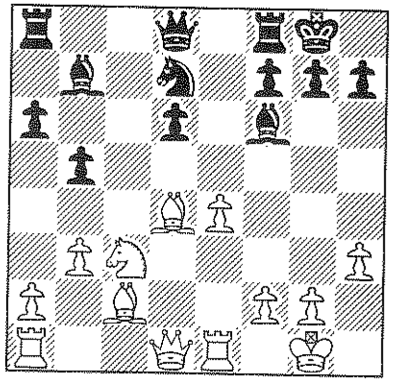
13 cxd4 ♘c6



14 ♘c3

The later game Stein-Tal (Moscow 1964) went 14 d5 ♘b4 15 ♘c3 ♗f6 16 ♗b2 ♘xc2 17 ♕xc2 ♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♘e2 ♕f6 ½-½.

14...♗f6! 15 ♗e3 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗b7



Unfortunately for Stein, his opponent has found the only correct move order. The situation has been discharged and White has no real opportunity to complicate the play.

18 ♘e2

It is no better to play 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♖e3?! ♖ac8! (Dely-Kozma, Pec 1964), or 18 ♖c1 ♖c8 19 ♗b1 ♖e8 20 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 ½-½ (Aseev-Graf, Kemerovo 1995).

18...♖e8 19 ♘g3 g6 20 b4 d5 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 exd5 ♖xe1+ 23 ♕xe1 ♗xd5 24 ♗b3 ♗xb3 25 axb3 ♕e5 26 ♕d1 ♘f6 27 ♖c1 ♖e8 28 ♕f3 ♘e4 29 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 30 ♕c3 ♕e5 31 ♕c5 ♔g7 32 ♖d1 ♕f6 ½-½

In the opinion of Gufeld and Lazarev, that day 'Stein was again led down by his nerves and he played too academically, even somehow constraindly.' But in my view, it was simply that he tragically guessed wrong with his choice of opening: after Black's accurate defence, there were no winning chances however White acted.

Incidentally, had he nevertheless won this game, an uncommonly idiotic competitive situation would have arisen: four such stars as Smyslov, Tal, Spassky and Stein would have had to play an additional match-tournament for three qualifying places!

But even as it was, the result of the Amsterdam Interzonal was highly significant: 1-4. Smyslov, Spassky, Tal and Larsen – 17 out of 23; 5. Stein – 16½; 6. Bronstein – 16. The last two remained outside the eight-man Candidates event – Ivkov and Portisch, who finished seventh and eighth in the tournament, were admitted instead. This was such a scandalous injustice that from the next FIDE cycle the restriction on Soviet players was finally abolished.

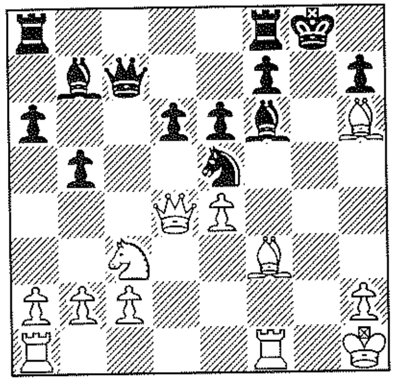
However, this did not help Stein and Bronstein, and it was also a great loss for the chess world that they did not get to play in the Candidates matches. I think that in 1965 Stein was the only player who could have seriously rivalled the winner of the cycle, Boris Spassky. Soon afterwards he brilliantly demonstrated that he was one of the strongest players on the planet – he performed splendidly for the Soviet team in two Olympiads (1964 and 1966), defeated Botvinnik with Black in the Trades Union Team Championship (1965), and won two further successive USSR Championships (1965 and 1966) as well as the grandiose grandmaster tournament in Moscow (1967), ahead of the current, one future and two former world champions!

There was a dramatic race in the 33rd USSR Championship (Tallinn 1965). After ten rounds Polugayevsky was confidently leading, 1½ points ahead of Stein, his nearest rival. But in the 11th round, in a very sharp struggle and after mutual mistakes in time-trouble, Leonid defeated the leader with Black. He then gained two more wins, took the lead and remained in first place to the end. Here is the noteworthy finish to one of his games.

Game 65

A.Khasin-L.Stein

33rd USSR Championship,
Tallinn 1965, 17th round



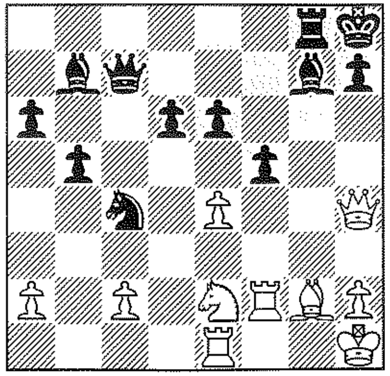
18...♔h8!

A surprise: White was hoping for 18...♖fd8? 19 ♗h5 ♕e7 20 ♖f2 with an attack. 'Many times in his career Stein deliberately sacrificed the exchange for a pawn, even without such obvious compensation as here. He had a subtle feeling for dynamic factors, and always gave preference to them ahead of material considerations.' (Gufeld, Lazarev) Nowadays such positional sacrifices have become typical methods.

19 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 20 ♖ad1 ♖d8 21 ♗g2 ♗g7 22 ♕f2 ♖g8! 23 ♕h4 f5 (23...♘c4!? 24 ♖d3 ♗e5 would appear to be even better) **24 ♖de1** (if 24 ♘e2, then 24...♘g6 25 ♕f2 ♗e5! 26 ♖g1 ♕e7 etc.) **24...♘c4 25 ♖f2 ♘xb2?**

Allowing the opponent to complicate the play. 25...♗d4! was correct.

26 ♘e2 ♘c4

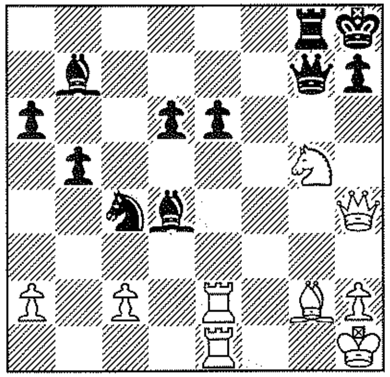


27 ♘g3?

27 exf5 exf5 (not 27...♘e3? 28 ♘f4) 28 ♘d4 ♕f7 was insufficient, but after 27 ♘f4! ♗c3 28 ♖ee2 an unclear situation would have arisen.

27...♗d4 28 ♖fe2 fxe4 29 ♘xe4 ♕g7 30 ♘g5?!

A time-trouble error. However, White's position is also unenviable after 30 ♘g3 ♗xg2+ 31 ♖xg2 e5.



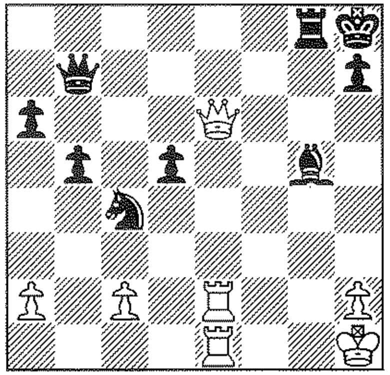
30...♗e3!

'A dagger blow! If 30...♗f6 White had prepared 31 ♕xh7+! ♕xh7 32 ♘xh7 ♖xg2 33 ♖xg2 ♔xh7 34 ♖xe6 and the endgame does not promise Black an easy win.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

31 ♗xb7 ♗xg5 32 ♕e4 d5 33 ♕xe6

Also after 33 ♗xd5 exd5 34 ♕xd5 ♘e3 (or 34...♗e3 35 ♖g2 ♕xg2+) 35 ♕e4 ♗h6 Black would still have been faced with converting his advantage.

33...♕xb7



34 ♖g1?

34 ♖g2 was essential, retaining some drawing chances after 34...♕a8 (34...d4? 35 h4!) 35 ♖e5! ♖g6 36 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 37 ♖xd5 ♗e3 38 ♖xg6 hxg6 39 ♖d7.

34...d4+ 35 ♖gg2 ♖f8 36 h4 ♖f1+ 37 ♔h2 ♗f4+ 0-1

Stein's victory in the 1967 Moscow international tournament, which assembled all the strongest players in the world, with the exception of Fischer, Korchnoi and Larsen, caused a genuine furore. By that time he had already won the USSR Championship three times (three gold medals in four years – no other Soviet player had achieved this!), and this event became altogether the 'tournament of his life'. Stein considered the following game to be one of the best in his career.

Game 66

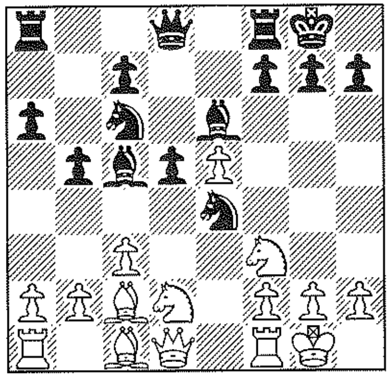
L.Stein-P.Keres

Moscow 1967, 12th round
Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4

Apparently Keres wanted to surprise his opponent, by avoiding his favourite closed variations. Let us see what came of this.

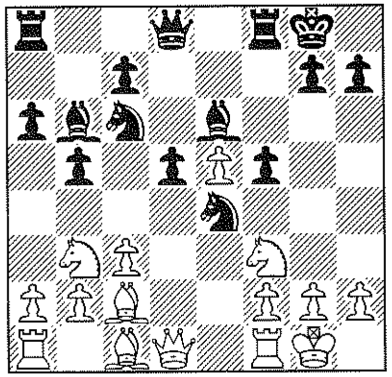
6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 ♗c5 (9...♘c5; 9...♗e7 – *Volume 1, Game No.65*) **10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2**



11...f5

11...♘xf2 12 ♖xf2 f6 13 exf6 (Smyslov-Botvinnik, Moscow Championship 1943/44) is no longer fashionable, since it is difficult and tedious to demonstrate equal chances in the endgame after 13...♗xf2+ 14 ♔xf2 ♕xf6 15 ♘f1 ♘e5 16 ♗e3. And the best move 11...♗f5, which occurred in the Karpov-Korchnoi matches (1978 and 1981), will be analysed in Volume 5.

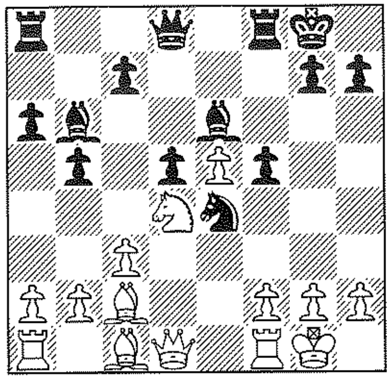
12 ♘b3 ♗b6



13 ♘fd4!

Since the time of the Boleslavsky-Szabo game (Groningen 1946) the strongest continuation was considered to be 13 a4 b4?! 14 a5!, but then they found 13...♕d7! 14 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 c5 with equality (Suetin-Nei, 34th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1966). Subsequently Suetin strengthened White's play with 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 16 ♗e3!, but even here after 16...♗xe3 17 fxe3 b4 18 ♘fd4 bxc3 19 ♗xe4 ♘xd4 Black should make a draw with careful defence.

13...♘xd4 14 ♘xd4



14...♕d7

Keres avoids the main and, apparently, best variation for Black – 14...♗xd4 15 cxd4 f4 16 f3 ♘g3 17 hxg3 fxg3 18 ♕d3! ♗f5! (*Volume 2, Game No.84*) with unclear complications, which can be avoided by 15 ♕xd4!? (Short-Timman, 12th matchgame, Spain 1993).

15 f3 (15 ♘xe6?! is premature after 15...♕xe6 16 ♗f4 g5! 17 ♗xe4 fxe4!) **15...♘c5 16 ♔h1!**

A subtle prophylactic move, the point of which is not immediately apparent.

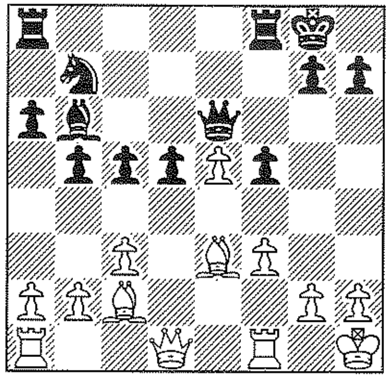
16...♘b7?

In hurrying to play the typical ...c7-c5, Black plays his knight to an extremely passive position. The opening intrigue would have been retained by 16...♖ae8!, for example: 17 b4 (17 ♗f4; 17 ♖e1!?) 17...♘a4 18 ♕d3 c5 19 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 20 ♗xa4 c4!? (this is better than 20...bxa4 21 bxc5 Kieninger-Bogoljubow, Krakow 1941) 21 ♕e2 bxa4 etc.

17 ♗e3!

17 a4 is not so dangerous in view of 17...♗xd4 18 cxd4 c5 (18...b4 19 ♗e3!) 19 dxc5 ♘xc5 20 axb5 ♕xb5 21 ♗e3 ♖fc8 22 ♗d4 a5!? 23 ♖a3 a4 24 ♖c3 ♘b3 25 ♗xb3 ♖xc3 26 ♗xa4, and now not 26...♖xa4? 27 bxc3 with an obvious advantage to White (Unzicker-Addison, Maribor 1967), but simply 26...♕xb2! with equality, since it is not possible to exploit the pin on the rook: 27 ♗c6 ♖a5 28 ♕e1 ♖a2! 29 ♖g1 ♖c1!

17...c5 18 ♘xe6 ♕xe6



A critical moment. 'For the moment it is still unclear what was bad about the knight move to b7,' write Gufeld and Lazarev. 'It would appear that Black has gained counterplay: how should White defend his e5-pawn?'

19 a4!

The first of a series of very strong moves. After the natural 19 f4 (as Simagin put it, this is what the overwhelming majority of masters would have played) 19...♖ad8 Black could have hoped to solve his opening problems.

'Tarrasch once remarked that a pawn sacrifice can sometimes be deeper than a piece sacrifice. Stein's astounding move as though illuminates all the defects in the placing of the black pieces and pawns. If 19...♕xe5, then 20 ♖e1! ♕d6 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 23 ♗xf5 and the white bishops develop enormous energy. Nothing is changed by 20...♗c7 21 ♗g1! – this, it turns out, is where 16 ♔h1! comes in useful. In these variations the knight at b7 plays a pitiful role.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

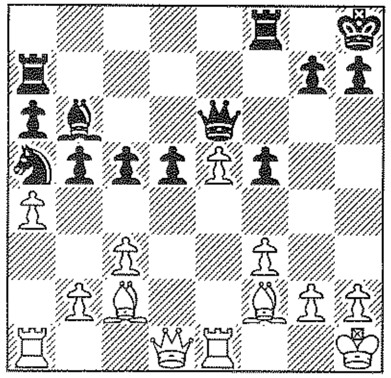
19...♘a5 20 ♗f2! (again subtle prophylaxis, sharply reducing the effect of ...♘c4) **20...♔h8**

It is also useful to hide the black king in the corner – to avoid problems on the a2-g8 diagonal. 'If 20...♘c4 Stein had prepared 21 b3! ♘xe5 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♖e1 (threatening f3-f4) 24...f4 25 b4!' (Gufeld, Lazarev), but it is even stronger to play 24 ♗xf5! ♕f7 (24...♕d6 25 ♗g3) 25 ♖e1 ♖e8 26 ♗b1 with an overwhelming advantage.

If instead 20...♕xe5, then 21 ♖e1! ♕d6 22 axb5 axb5 23 b4! cxb4 24 ♗xb6 ♕xb6, and now not 25 ♕xd5+? ♔h8 26 cxb4 (Dolmatov) on account of 26...♕c6! with an unclear game, but immediately 25 cxb4!, winning. Or 23...♗c7 24 ♗g3! f4 25 ♗f2 cxb4 26 cxb4 ♘c6 27 ♗c5, winning the exchange and the game.

21 ♖e1 ♖a7

21...d4 is insufficient in view of 22 axb5 axb5 23 b4! cxb4 24 cxd4! b3 (24...♖ad8? 25 ♖xa5! ♗xa5 26 ♗b3) 25 ♗d3, when Black cannot hold the position.



22 ♕e2! b4 23 cxb4 cxb4 24 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 25 ♖ad1 ♕c5?

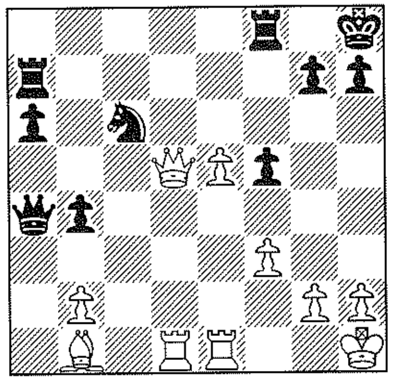
A mistake in a difficult position. It was also bad to play 25...♕e6 26 ♕d2! (Dolmatov). In my view, the last chance of setting up a defence was 25...b3! (trying to restrict the light-squared bishop with a palisade of pawns), although even in this case White would have retained an enduring initiative after 26 ♗b1! ♕e6 27 ♕d3 ♖d7 28 f4.

26 ♗d3!

The bishop starts to become violent. 'The black pawns resemble a jaw full of rotten teeth. Stein the dentist sets about extracting them.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

26...♕b6 27 ♗b1! ♕c6 (if 27...d4, then White has 28 ♕d3! ♖d7 29 e6 ♖d5 30 g4! or 28...♘c6 29 ♗a2! g6 30 ♗c4) **28 ♕d2! ♕xa4 29 ♕xd5 ♘c6**

Black's resistance has been broken: it was no better to play 29...♕b5 30 ♕xb5 axb5 31 ♗xf5!, or 29...♖e7 30 f4 ♘b7 31 ♗xf5! ♖xf5 32 ♕xb7!



30 ♗xf5! (an elegant finish) **30...♕b5** (not 30...♖xf5? 31 ♕d8+! or 30...♘e7(b8) 31 ♕c5!) **31 ♕d6 ♕b8 32 ♕xc6 ♖xf5 33 e6 ♖e7 34 ♖d7 ♖e8 35 ♖b7 ♕c8 36 ♖c7 ♕b8**

If 36...♕d8 37 e7 ♕b8 it is too early for 38 ♖c8? ♖xc8 39 e8♕+ (Dolmatov) on account of 39...♖f8!, but after 38 ♕d7! Black can resign.

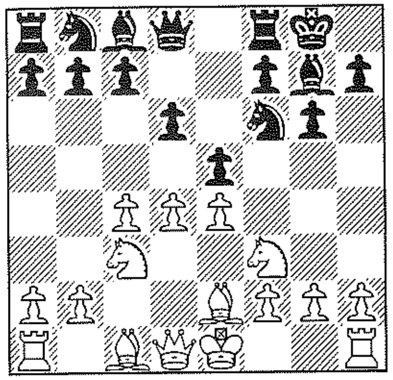
37 ♕d7 ♖g5 38 f4 ♖g6 39 f5 ♖g5 40 f6! 1-0

A highly publishable game!

In this tournament Stein began a sharp King's Indian 'discussion' with the world champion Petrosian, which was continued a couple of months later in the USSR Team Championship. Ultimately this led to the creation of a fundamentally new system of counterplay in one of the sharpest opening variations.

Game 67
T.Petrosian-L.Stein
USSR Team Championship,
Moscow 1967
King's Indian Defence E92

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5



7 d5

In the modern variation 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 it was fashionable in those days to play 9 ♘e1 ♘d7 10 f3 f5 11 g4 ♘f6 12 ♘g2 with the idea of a squeeze after 12...h5? 13 g5 ♘h7 14 h4 or 12...f4?! 13 h4, denying Black counterplay. But Leonid found the correct method – 12...c6! (unexpected play on the flank where White usually attacks!) 13 ♖b1 cxd5 14 cxd5 ♗d7, for example:

1) 15 ♗e3 f4 16 ♗f2 g5 17 ♕d3 h5 18 h3 hxg4 19 hxg4 ♔f7 20 ♘b5 ♗xb5 21 ♕xb5 ♖h8 22 ♖bc1 ♕g8 23 ♗e1 ♕h7 with equality (Portisch-Stein, Erevan 1965);

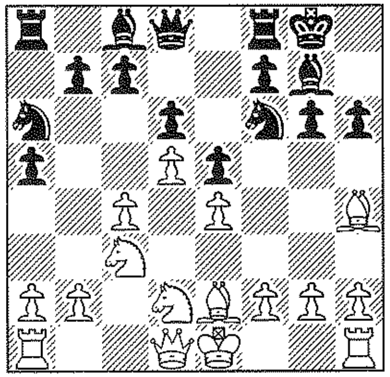
2) 15 ♗d2 ♖c8 16 a4 ♕b6+ 17 ♗e3 ♕b4! 18 g5 ♘h5 19 ♗b5 ♗xb5 20 axb5 ♘f4! 21 ♕d2 (it is better to play 21 ♘xf4 exf4 22 ♗xa7 fxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♖f5 24 ♕e1! ♘xd5 25 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 26 h4 ♖a8 27 ♗f2 ♘d3 28 ♖fd1 ♘xf2 29 ♔xf2 ♖xb5 30 ♖xd6 ♖xb2+ 31 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 32 ♔g2 with equality) 21...♘h3+ 22 ♔h1 b6 23 ♖a1 ♕c4 24 ♕d1 ♕c7 25 ♕a4 f4 26 ♗d2? (Black also has the initiative after the better 26 ♗f2 ♖a8 27 ♗h4 h6! 28 gxh6 ♗xh6) 26...♖a8 27 ♘a2 ♘xg5 28 ♘b4 ♕d7 29 ♖ac1?! ♘f7 30 ♖c4?! g5 31 ♖fc1 ♘g6 32 ♘a6 ♕h3 33 ♕d1 g4!.. 0-1 (A.Nikitin-Stein, Kislovodsk 1966).

7...a5! (developed by Stein and Geller; 7...♘bd7 – *Game No.6*; 7...♘a6 – *Game No.9*; 7...h6 – *Game No.55*) **8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♘a6 10 ♘d2**

A little earlier, in the Moscow international tournament, two important games were played where White began with 10 0-0:

1) 10...g5?! 11 ♗g3 ♘h5 12 ♘d2 ♘f4 13 ♗g4 ♘c5 14 f3?! (14 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 15 a3 c6 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 ♘cd3 18 ♕b3 offers a small plus – Dolmatov) 14...c6! 15 ♕c2 cxd5 16 cxd5 b5! (again play over the entire board!) 17 a4 (17 ♘xb5? ♕b6) 17...bxa4? (the correct move is 17...b4!? 18 ♘b5 ♘e2+ and ...♘d4 with excellent counterplay) 18 ♘c4 h5 19 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♘xa4 ♕c7 21 ♘e3! ♕a7 22 ♗f2?! (22 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 23 ♕d2 ♖b8 24 ♗f2 ♕c7 25 g3 is safer) 22...♘cd3 23 ♕d2 ♘xf2 24 ♖xf2 g4!? 25 ♘f5? gxf3 26 ♔h1? ♕xf2! 27 ♕xf2 fxg2+ 28 ♕xg2 ♘xg2 29 ♔xg2 ♖c2+ 30 ♔f3 ♖b8!.. 0-1 (Gligoric-Stein);

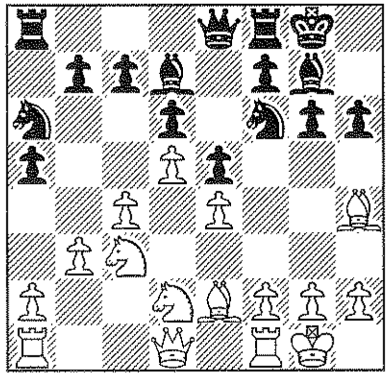
2) 10...♕d7 (original, but even so 10...♕e8! is more natural) 11 ♘d2 c5 12 a3 ♘e8 13 f3 ♗f6 14 ♗f2 ♗g5 15 ♘b3 ♕d8 16 ♘c1 ♗d7 17 ♘d3 ♖c8! 18 g3 f5 19 exf5 gxf5 20 f4 ♗f6 21 ♗e3 ♗g7 22 ♕d2 e4 23 ♘f2 ♘f6 24 h3 ♕e8 with equality (Petrosian-Stein).



This was the first occasion on which Black was to demonstrate a deep idea, exploiting the drawbacks of the bishop's position at h4. This plan was destined to have a long life, and in the end it reduced the popularity of the Petrosian Variation.

10...♕e8! 11 0-0 ♗d7 12 b3

An almost obligatory inclusion: if 12 a3 ♘h7 13 ♖b1, then 13...a4! is good. Later there also occurred 12 ♔h1 ♘h7 13 a3 h5! 14 f3 ♗f6!? (instead of the usual 14...♗h6) 15 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 16 b3 ♕e7 17 ♕e1 ♔g7 with equality (Gulko-Kasparov, Novgorod 1995), or 15 ♗f2!? h4 16 b3 ♗g5 17 ♖b1 ♕e7 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 ♘f6! (planning ...♘h5, ...♗f4, ...♕g5 and a possible ...♘g3+) 20 c5 dxc5! 21 ♗xa6 cxb4 22 ♗xb7 bxc3! 23 ♗xa8 cxd2 and the strong pawn promises Black quite good counter-chances (Golod-Mittelman, Beersheba 1998).



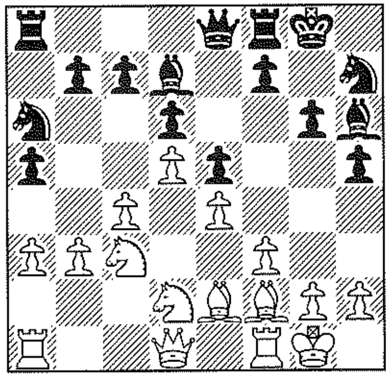
12...♘h7! 13 f3

13 ♖b1 is not very successful after 13...h5! (threatening ...g6-g5) 14 h3 ♗h6 15 a3 ♘c5! 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 ♘a4 18 ♘xa4 ♖xa4 19 ♕c2 b6 with equality (Bukic-Geller, Budva 1967), while if 13 a3 there can follow 13...f5 14 exf5 gxf5!? (14...♗xf5 has also been played with some success) 15 ♗h5 ♕c8 16 ♗e7 ♖e8! 17 ♗xe8 ♕xe8 18 ♗h4 e4 with sufficient compensation for the exchange (Yusupov-Kasparov, Barcelona 1989).

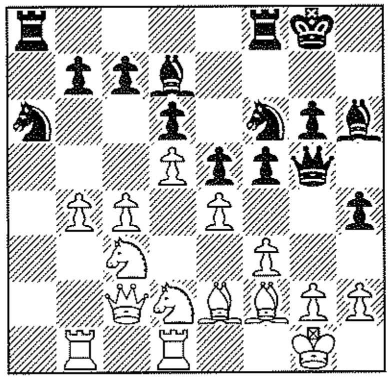
13...h5! (in order to get rid of the bad bishop by ...♗h6) **14 ♗f2**

In the 1980s a different idea came to the forefront: 14 a3 ♗h6 15 ♔h1!? ♗e3 16 ♖b1 (with the idea of 16...♘c5?! 17 ♕c2 f5 18 b4, but 16...f5 or 16...♗c5 is better), and then also 16 ♕c2 f5 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♗f2!? ♗xf2 19 ♖xf2 ♘f6 20 ♖g1 ♔h8 21 ♕b2 ♘c5 (Kramnik-Gelfand, Linares 1994) or 21...c5 (Kramnik-Bologan, Germany 1994) with double-edged play.

14...♗h6 15 a3



15...♕e7! (with the threat of ...♕g5 and ...♗h3) **16 ♕c2 h4 17 ♖fd1 f5** (17...♗f4!?) **18 ♖ab1 ♕g5** (here too 18...♗f4!? is interesting) **19 b4 axb4 20 axb4 ♘f6**



21 f4!

Sensing the danger and very well aware of his opponent's attacking capabilities, Petrosian forces a draw. However, he could have launched into a maelstrom of complications with 21 c5!? h3 22 g3 f4 23 c6 bxc6 24 dxc6 ♗e6 25 b5 ♘c5 26 ♘c4, for example: 26...fxg3 27 hxg3 h2+ 28 ♔h1 ♘h5 29 ♔xh2 ♘f4 30 ♗f1 etc.

21...♕xf4 (not 21...exf4?! 22 ♘f3 ♕h5 23 ♘xh4 ♘g4 24 b5 ♘c5 25 e5!) **22 g3 hxg3 23 hxg3 ♕g5 24 ♘f3 ♕h5 25 ♘xe5 ♕h3 26 ♗f1** (not 26 ♘xg6? ♗e3!) **26...♕h5 27 ♗e2** (avoiding the risky 27 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 28 exf5 gxf5 29 ♕e2 ♕g5 30 ♕e6+ ♖f7 31 c5 ♘f8) **27...♕h3 28 ♗f1 ♕h5 ½-½**

A very important contribution to the theory of the 'Ukrainian Variation'.

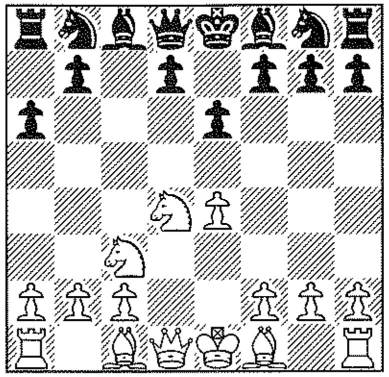
'His recent successes,' wrote Alexander Kotov in the summer of 1967, 'have brought Leonid Stein to the very pedestal of the chess throne. Many believe that in two year's time it is the grandmaster from Lvov who will be playing against Tigran Petrosian.'

But no, on this occasion too he did not overcome the Interzonal barrier, although he was one of the favourites for the tournament (Sousse, autumn 1967). His play differed clearly from that which he had displayed in Moscow. It would appear that the old 'Stockholm-Amsterdam syndrome' made itself felt: constraint, anxiety... Leonid was so out of sorts that he lost to almost all his immediate rivals – Fischer (this zero, fortunately, was annulled), Larsen, Hort, Portisch and even Gligoric, against whom he previously had a 7-0 score! Nevertheless, he shared 6th-8th places and was leading in the additional three-man match-tournament for sixth place (Los Angeles, February 1968), but he lost at the finish to Hort, and things again ended in a tie: 1-3. Hort, Reshevsky and Stein – 4 out of 8. Through having the best Berger coefficient in the Interzonal tournament, the 56-year-old Reshevsky was declared the Candidate.

Such chronic failures are capable of breaking anyone. After his sensational successes in the mid-1960s, Stein experienced a slump: his nervous system was unable to withstand the excessively cruel experiences of fate. In the next cycle he failed for the first time to qualify for the Interzonal tournament, finishing sixth in the very strong, Zonal 37th USSR Championship (1969). Although at times he was his former brilliant self – for example, in the following game, where he refuted his opponent's dubious strategy irreproachably and with consummate elegance.

Game 68
L.Stein-S.Furman
37th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1969, 18th round
Sicilian Defence B43

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3



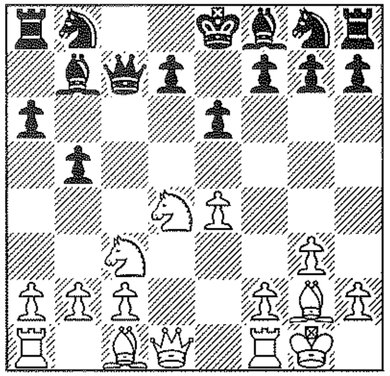
5...♕c7

Nowadays it is known that in the plan with an early ...b7-b5 Black should not waste a tempo on ...♕c7 and that it is better to play 5...b5 immediately, for example: 6 g3 ♗b7 7 ♗g2 b4 8 ♘a4 ♘f6 with a double-edged game (Adams-Kasparov, Tilburg 1997), or 6 ♗d3 ♕b6! (an idea of the 1970s – to drive the d4-knight from the centre) 7 ♘b3 ♕c7 8 0-0 ♗b7 with a comfortable game for Black, and so White began trying his luck with 7 ♗e3 ♗c5 8 ♗e2 or 7 ♘f3.

6 g3 (6 ♗e2 or 6 ♗d3 is another topic) **6...b5?**

It was the present game that showed that now this is bad, since after ...b5-b4 White always has the reply ♘d5! with a powerful attack. It is safer to play 6...♘f6 7 ♗g2, and here 7...♘c6 8 0-0 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 ♗c5 10 ♗f4 d6 (Fischer-Taimanov, 4th matchgame, Vancouver 1971 – we will analyse this classic game in Volume 4) or the transposition into a Scheveningen by 7...♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗e3 d6. 'But this was well known to Stein, since it had occurred several times in his games.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

7 ♗g2 ♗b7 8 0-0



Strangely enough, it is already hard to offer Black any good advice.

8...♘f6

After 8...b4 both the quiet 9 ♘a4 ♘f6 10 ♖e1! ♗e7 11 c3 and the sharp 9 ♘d5!? exd5 10 exd5 are unpleasant for Black. And if Black plays 8...♗c5 then 9 ♗e3 is strong, to meet 9...♘f6? by 10 ♘dxb5! axb5 11 ♘xb5 ♕b6 12 ♗xc5 ♕xb5 13 ♕d6 ♘c6 14 b4, while 8...d6 9 ♖e1! ♗e7 is bad on account of the continuation 10 a4 bxa4 11 ♕h5! g6 12 ♕e2 ♘c6 13 ♖xa4 ♘xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖c8 15 ♗d2 ♘f6 16 ♗h6 ♕b6 17 ♖d3 (Nunn-Sigurjonsson, London 1975).

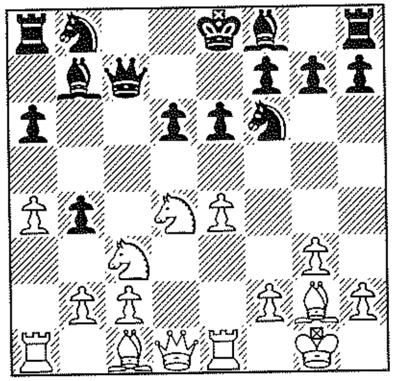
Finally, it is dangerous to play 8...♘c6 9 ♖e1 d6?! 10 ♘d5! or 9...♗c5 10 ♘b3 ♗b6 11 a4 b4 12 ♘d5!, and even after the resourceful 9...♘e5 10 f4 ♘c4 11 b3 ♗b4 there can follow 12 ♘d5!? As we see, in many variations White's attack relies on the gambit mechanism ♖e1 and ♘d5!, which has long since become a well-known technique. But at that time it was a novelty and Stein was one of the bold pioneers.

9 ♖e1! (illuminating by X-ray the black king, which is caught in the centre) **9...d6**

It is amusing that 9...♘c6 would have led to a position from the ancient game Blackburne-Paulsen (Nürnberg 1883), which continued 10 ♗g5?! ♘xd4 11 ♕xd4 ♗c5 12 ♕d2 ♘g4 with roughly equal chances. Of course, in our day any club player would unhesitatingly play 10 ♘d5! without hesitation.

10 a4! b4

If 10...bxa4 there can again follow 11 ♘d5! exd5 12 exd5+ ♔d8 13 ♗g5 ♕c5 14 c4 ♘bd7 15 ♘c6+ (Keitlinghaus-Kempinski, Pardubice 1994).



11 ♘d5! exd5

'Furman too does not stop halfway, since the refusal of the sacrifice – 11...♘xd5 12 exd5 e5 – would have allowed White to gain a significant positional advantage without risk by 13 a5!' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

12 exd5+ ♔d8 13 ♗g5 ♘bd7

The kingside reserves cannot come into play for the moment – 13...♗e7 14 ♘f5 ♖e8 15 ♘xg7 ♖g8 16 ♕d4! (Milic). And it is no better to play 13...♗c8 14 ♗xf6+ gxf6 15 ♕h5! ♖a7 16 ♖e4 ♗g7 17 ♖ae1 with a decisive attack (Quinones-Higashi, Siegen Olympiad 1970).

14 ♕e2

It is also difficult for Black to hold out after 14 ♘c6+!? ♗xc6 (14...♔c8 15 ♗xf6) 15 dxc6 ♘c5 16 ♗xf6+ gxf6 17 ♕d4 ♗g7 18 ♕xb4.

14...♔c8

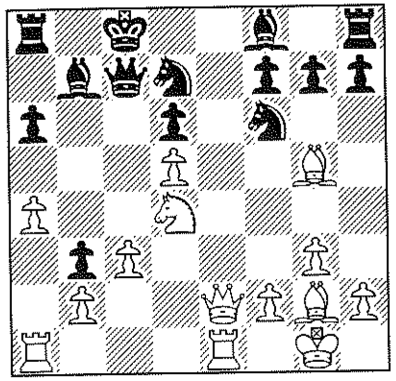
It is hopeless to play 14...♕b6 15 c3! ♘e5 16 a5 ♕c5 17 ♘c6+! ♔c8 18 ♗e3 ♕b5 19 ♗h3+ ♘fd7 20 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 21 ♘xe5+ ♔c8 22 c4 1-0 (Smirin-Gelfand, Sverdlovsk 1987).

15 c3!

White does not achieve his aim with 15 ♕e8+?! ♕d8 (not 15...♘xe8? 16 ♖xe8+ ♕d8 17 ♗xd8) 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕xf7 ♘e5 18 ♕e6+ ♔b8 19 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 20 dxc6 ♖a7 with equality, or 16...♘xf6!? 17 ♕xf7 (17 ♗h3+ ♔c7 18 ♕xf7+ ♔b8), and although, according to Gufeld and Lazarev, 'Black's position is unenviable,' he has nothing to fear after 17...♕d7!

15...b3

Also after 15...h6 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 17 cxb4 White's attack can hardly be parried.



16 ♘c6!

Thematic, although with the pawn on b3 White could now also have won by 16 ♕e8+! ♕d8 17 ♕xf7 ♘e5 (17...h6 18 ♘c6!) 18 ♖xe5! dxe5 19 ♗h3+ ♔b8 20 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 21 dxc6 ♖a7 22 ♕xb3+ ♔a8 23 ♖d1!, or 21...♕b6 22 ♗xf6 gxf6 23 ♕xf6 ♖g8 24 ♖d1.

16...♗xc6 17 dxc6 ♘e5 18 ♖a3! d5

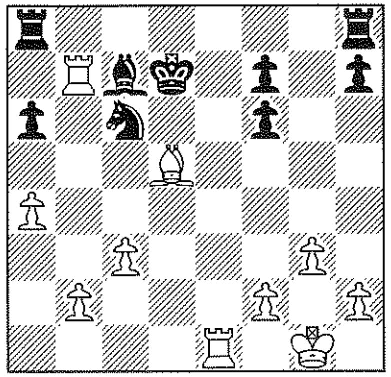
If 18...♕b6, then 19 c7! Instead of this, Gufeld and Lazarev give 18...♗e7 (18...♘xc6? 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♕e8+) 19 ♖xb3 ♘xc6 20 ♕f3 (not 20 ♗xc6? ♕xc6 21 ♕xe7 ♖e8!) 20...d5 *(? – G.K.)* 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 (21...♗xf6 22 ♗h3+!) 22 ♕xd5 and wins.

In fact, it is more tenacious to play 20...♖b8! 21 ♕xc6 ♖xb3 22 ♕xc7+ ♔xc7 23 ♖xe7+ ♔b8 24 ♖xf7 ♖xb2 25 ♖xg7 ♖b1+ 26 ♗f1 ♘e4 with chances of a draw. But on the other hand, instead of 20 ♕f3 White has the very strong 20 a5!! d5 (20...♖a7 21 ♗e3!) 21 ♖b6 ♖a7 22 ♗h3+, winning.

19 ♖xb3 (Stein's conduct of the further conversion stage cannot be praised too highly) **19...♗d6 20 ♗xf6 gxf6 21 ♗xd5 ♘xc6 22 ♕g4+!**

There was a more complicated way to win, involving a queen sacrifice: 22 ♗g2 ♖a7 23 ♗h3+ ♔d8 24 ♕f3 ♗e7 25 ♖d1+ ♔e8 26 ♕xc6+! ♕xc6 27 ♖b8+ ♗d8 28 ♖bxd8+ ♔e7 29 ♖xh8 ♕xa4 30 ♖e1+ etc.

22...♕d7 (22...♔d8? 23 ♕f3) **23 ♕xd7+!** (this is simpler than 23 ♕c4 ♔c7 24 ♖d1 and a4-a5) **23...♔xd7 24 ♖b7+ ♗c7**



25 ♗g2! (with the murderous threat of ♖d1+) **25...♖ad8**

But not 25...♖hd8 26 ♖d1+ ♔c8 27 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 (27...♔xb7? 28 ♗xc6+!) 28 ♗xc6 etc.

26 ♗h3+!

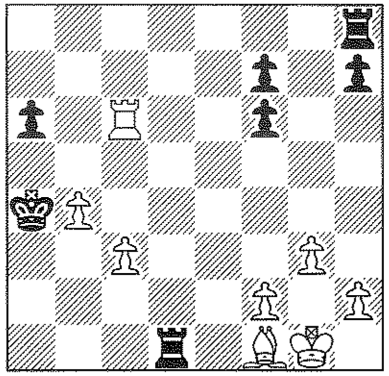
Now if 26 ♖d1+? there was the reply 26...♔c8 27 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8, enabling Black to set up a defence – 28 ♖a7 a5 29 b4 ♖e8.

26...♔d6 (26...f5 27 ♗xf5+ ♔d6 28 ♖d1+ ♔c5 29 ♗d3! or 28...♔e5 29 ♗d7! etc.) **27 ♖d1+ ♔c5 28 b4+ ♔c4 29 ♗f1+** (or 29 ♖b1! ♗e5 30 ♗f1+) **29...♔b3** (29...♔xc3 30 ♖c1+) **30 ♖xc7**

30 ♖b1+?! ♔a2 31 ♖xc7 was inaccurate, since after the unexpected 31...♘e5!! 32 f4! (32 ♖c1 ♔b2) 32...♔xb1 33 fxe5 fxe5 34 ♗xa6 ♔c2 35 a5 e4 the situation would have become sharper.

30...♖xd1 31 ♖xc6 ♔xa4

Perhaps 31...♖hd8 32 ♖xa6 ♔xc3 offered more chances, although after 33 b5 f5 (or 33...♖a1 34 ♔g2 ♔b4 35 ♖xf6 ♖d7 36 ♖h6) 34 ♔g2 ♔b4 35 ♖f6 ♖8d7 36 b6 ♔xa4 37 ♗a6 ♖c1 38 ♖xf5 ♖b1 39 b7 White would have won all the same.



32 ♔g2!

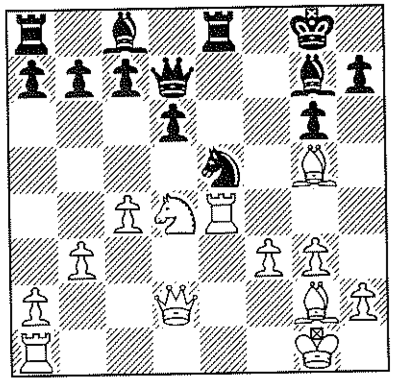
'After 32 ♖xa6+ ♔b3 there would still have been some technical difficulties, for example: 33 ♖xf6 ♔xc3 34 b5 ♖e8 35 ♔g2 ♖ee1! and the bishop is trapped!' (Gufeld, Lazarev) Therefore it is correct to play 33 ♖c6! ♖e8 34 ♔g2 ♖ee1 35 ♗a6 etc.

32...a5 (desperation: 32...♖hd8 33 ♖xa6+ ♔b3 34 ♖xf6) **33 bxa5 ♖hd8** (33...♔xa5? 34 ♖a6 mate) **34 ♖xf6 ♖8d7 35 a6 ♖c1 36 ♗d3! ♖xc3** (36...♖xd3 37 a7!) **37 ♗xh7 ♔b5 38 ♗e4 ♖a3 39 ♗b7 ♔c5 40 h4 ♔d4 41 ♖f5 ♖e7 42 h5 ♖e5 43 ♖f4+ ♔c5 44 h6 1-0**

That same evening Leonid met the young Karpov, who later recalled: 'My teacher Semion Furman introduced me to the famous grandmaster, when they were analysing their game. I watched with interest how they approached the position in their different ways: Furman endeavoured to give generalising evaluations, while Stein "fired out" a machine-gun-like stream of variations... He had a fantastic talent!'

At the end of 1969 Stein made the best score (+4=4) on board 1 in the USSR Team Championship, winning a memorable game against Yuri Nikitin with a purely positional sacrifice of the queen for a rook and the 'King's Indian' bishop. And in the spring of 1970 he almost created another masterpiece in his favourite King's Indian Defence, playing Black against Larsen in the 4th round of the 'Match of the Century' in Belgrade:

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 c4 0-0 5 0-0 d6 6 d4 ♘bd7 7 ♘c3 e5 8 e4 exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♖e8 10 ♖e1?! ♘g4! 11 f3?! ♘ge5 12 b3 ♘c5 13 ♗e3 f5! 14 ♕d2 (14 exf5? ♘ed3!) **14...fxe4! 15 ♗g5 ♕d7! 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♖xe4**



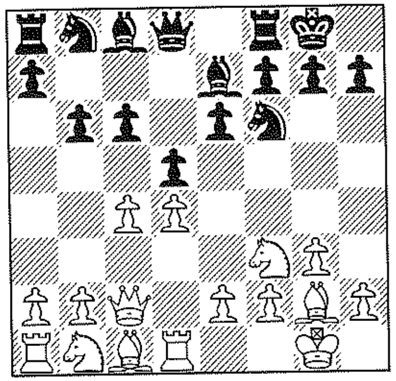
Here, instead of the **17...♘c6?** that occurred in the game, there was a simple win by 17...♘f7! (Murey), for example: 18 ♗h3 (18 ♖ae1 ♗xd4+; 18 ♗f4 ♖xe4 19 fxe4 c5) 18...♖xe4! 19 ♗xd7 ♖xd4 20 ♕b4 ♗xd7 21 ♕xb7 ♖e8 22 ♕xc7 ♗h3, or 18 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 19 ♗e3 c5 etc. A typical lapse of the nervous system!

In that same year, 1970, Stein shared 2nd-3rd places in a strong international tournament in Caracas (where, incidentally, Karpov achieved the grandmaster norm) and finished third in the 38th USSR Championship (+8-1=12). In the next national championship he again scored eight wins, but on account of five zeroes only shared 5th-6th places. And yet he contrived to win the two games – against Polugayevsky and Tal – that were judged the best in the entire tournament!

These wins reflected the evolution of his style, which with the years, like that of Tal, became increasingly solid, positional and technical, while retaining its sharp tactical content. Stein liked to fianchetto not only his f8-bishop, but also its opposite number at f1, and with White he increasingly often played closed games – the King's Indian Attack, English or Catalan. In this way he brilliantly defeated, for example, Novopashin, Klovans (31st USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963) and Filip (Moscow 1967), and now also Polugayevsky and Tal. Both games, as the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* wrote, are noteworthy for their power of logic, iron consistency in the implementation of strategic plans, and accuracy in converting an advantage. Here is one of them.

Game 69
L.Stein-M.Tal
39th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1971, 20th round
Catalan Opening E08

1 c4 ♘f6 2 g3 e6 3 ♗g2 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 c6 7 ♕c2 b6 8 ♖d1

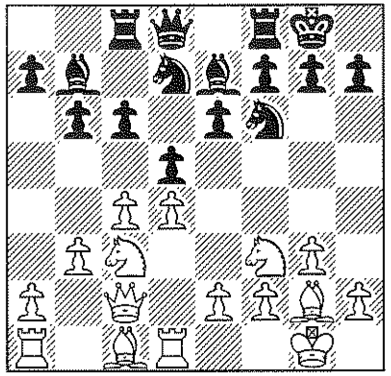


8...♗b7

Modern praxis gives preference to variations with an attack on the c4-pawn – 8...♘bd7 9 b3 ♗a6 or 8...♗a6 9 ♘e5 ♘fd7.

9 ♘c3 ♘bd7 (9...♘a6 10 a3 ♕c8 has also been played) **10 b3 ♖c8**

Perhaps the immediate 10...c5!? is better. Black fails to solve his problems with 10...♕c8 11 ♗b2 b5 12 c5! (Smejkal-Hübner, Biel Interzonal 1976), or 10...b5 11 c5!, but not 11 cxb5 cxb5 12 ♘xb5 ♕a5 13 a4 ♖fc8! (13...♘e4?! 14 ♘d2! Korchnoi-Spassky, Moscow 1971) 14 ♕a2 ♗a6 15 ♗d2 ♕b6 with counterplay for the pawn (Espig-Spassky, Tallinn 1975).



11 e4! c5

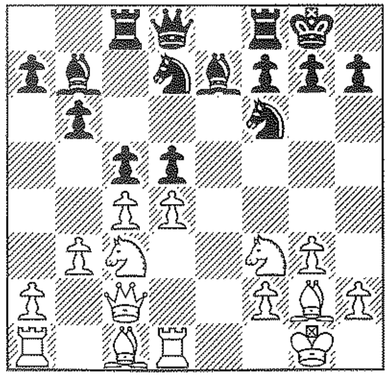
The exchange on e4 is considered to be favourable for White:

1) 11...♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♕xe4 b5 (13...♘f6 14 ♕e2 or 14 ♕c2; 13...♕c7 14 ♗f4! ♗d6 15 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 16 c5! ♕c7 17 b4 Stein-Liberzon, 38th USSR Championship, Riga 1970) 14 ♗f4 bxc4 15 bxc4 ♕a5 16 ♕c2! ♗a8 (16...c5? 17 ♘g5!) 17 c5! (Salov-Spassky, France 1994);

2) 11...dxe4 12 ♘g5! c5?! (12...h6 13 ♘gxe4 ♘xe4 14 ♘xe4 ♘f6 15 c5! Belyavsky-Mitkov, Panormo 2001) 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♗xe4!! ♕c7 15 ♗xh7+ (Voitkevich-Ziyatdinov, Philadelphia 1998), while if 14...♘xe4 15 ♘cxe4 ♗xe4 16 ♕xe4 g6 White wins by 17 ♕h4 h5 18 g4! ♕f6 (18...♕e7 19 gxh5 ♘e5 20 ♔f1! ♘c6 21 ♗e3 etc.) 19 gxh5! ♕xa1 20 hxg6 ♗xf2+ 21 ♕xf2 fxg6 22 ♕d2! with the threats of ♕xd7 and ♗b2.

12 exd5 exd5

An important opening divergence.



13 dxc5

Soon afterwards against Lengyel (Moscow 1971) Stein improved White's play with 13 ♗b2! ♕c7 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 cxd5 ♗xd5 16 dxc5 ♗xf3?! 17 ♗xf3 ♘xc5 18 ♕f5! ♖fd8? 19 ♗e5! 1-0.

After 13 ♗b2 it also insufficient to play 13...a6 14 cxd5! (Polugayevsky-Reshevsky, Lone Pine 1978), or 13...dxc4?! 14 d5! – a recommendation of Polugayevsky, about which Black did not know in the game Kasparov-Kamsky (New York rapidplay 1989): 14...♘e8 15 ♘b5 a6 16 ♘a7 ♖c7 17 ♘c6, winning. And after the flexible 13...♖e8! White has the unpleasant 14 ♘h4 (14 ♘g5!? h6 15 ♘h3 cxd4 16 ♖xd4 ♘e5! V.Mikhalevsky-Bigaliev, Berlin 1997) 14...cxd4 15 ♖xd4 ♗c5 16 ♖d2 with the intention of ♘f5.

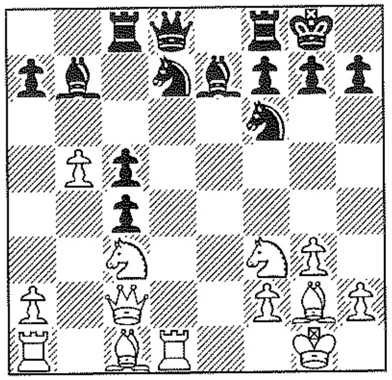
13...dxc4 (13...♘xc5? 14 ♘g5!) **14 b4!**

'A clever pawn sacrifice of a purely positional nature.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

14...bxc5?!

It would appear that the 'Riga magician' became carried away by the calculation of a grandiose combination (cf. the following note). Otherwise he would have preferred the relieving 14...a5 (Korchnoi), for example: 15 a3 axb4! (simpler than 15...bxc5 16 b5 ♕b6) 16 axb4 bxc5 17 b5 ♖a8 with equality (Tal), or 15 bxa5 bxa5! (not 15...bxc5?! 16 ♘e5 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♕c7 18 ♘xc4... 1-0 Tal-Wedberg, New York 1990) 16 ♘a4 (recommended by Tal) 16...♗d5 or 16...♕e8 with a good game.

15 b5



15...♕b6?

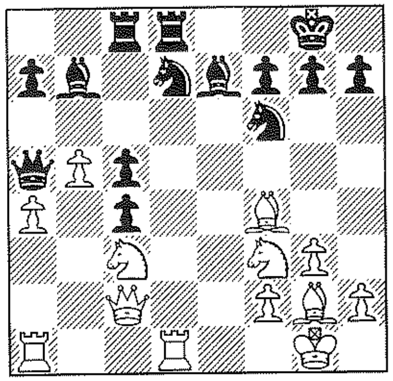
A fatal waste of a tempo. Tal spent a very long time calculating a pretty queen sacrifice – 15...♗xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♘e5?! 17 ♖xd8 ♘xf3+ 18 ♔h1 (18 ♔g2?? ♘e1+!) 18...♖cxd8 19 ♕e2! ♖d3 20 ♕xe7 ♖e8 21 ♕xc5 (21 ♕xa7?? ♖e1+ 22 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 23 ♔h3 g5! and wins) 21...♖e5 22 ♕xc4?! ♖e1+ 23 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 24 ♔h3 g5 etc.

In post-game analysis Tal regretted that he hadn't gone in for this continuation, but Stein asserted that here too he would have had winning chances. The machine quickly resolves the dispute in White's favour: 22 ♕c8+! ♖e8 23 ♕f5! ♖e5 (23...♖xc3 24 ♗b2 ♖d3 25 ♗xf6 gxf6 26 ♕g4+ and ♕xc4) 24 ♕f4! ♖e1+ (24...♖xc3 25 ♗e3!; 24...g5 25 ♕xf6 ♖e1+ 26 ♔g2 g4 27 ♗h6!) 25 ♔g2 ♖g1+ (25...♖xc3 26 ♗b2) 26 ♔h3 ♘d7 (26...h6 27 ♘e4) 27 ♗b2 and wins. Alas, that is the fate of many of Tal's combinations in the computer era – everything in its own time!

But, in rejecting the tempting sacrifice, Black also missed the strongest defence – 15...♕a5! with the idea of 16 ♘d2?! ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♘b6 or 16 a4 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♘e5 and ...♘d3 with equality. If 16 ♗d2 it was possible to play 16...♕a3 or even 16...♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♘e5 with quite good prospects of equalising.

16 ♗f4 ♖fd8 17 a4! (17 ♕e2 ♕e6! Fridman-Gabriel, Dresden 1994) **17...♕a5?!**

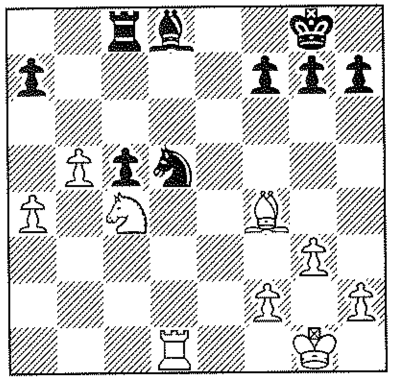
After 17...♘f8, instead of 18 a5?! ♖xd1+ 19 ♕xd1 ♕d8 with equality (Liebert-Neikirch, Potsdam 1974), the preparatory 18 ♖e1! is good. And White also has a clear advantage in the event of 17...a5 18 ♕e2!: 18...♕e6 19 ♖e1! ♕xe2 20 ♖xe2 ♖e8 21 ♖ae1 ♗f8 22 ♘e5 ♗xg2 23 ♘xd7, or 18...♖e8 19 ♕xc4 h6 20 ♖a2 ♘f8 21 ♘e5 etc.



18 ♘d2! (a 'little combination' in the style of Capablanca) **18...♗xg2 19 ♘xc4 ♕b4 20 ♘a2! ♗e4 21 ♘xb4**

Apparently Tal had overlooked that the white knight defends the queen in his preliminary calculations. Now Black has a very difficult endgame with minimal chances of a draw.

21...♗xc2 22 ♘xc2 ♘b6 23 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 (if 23...♖xd8, then 24 ♘e5 or 24 ♘xb6 axb6 25 ♗c7) **24 ♘2e3 ♘xc4 25 ♘xc4 ♘d5 26 ♖d1**



26...♘b6?!

It is doubtful whether Black would have been saved by the more tenacious 26...♘xf4 27 gxf4 ♔f8 (Korchnoi) 28 ♖d5 ♔e7 29 ♔g2 and a4-a5, or 27...♗c7 28 a5 ♔f8 (28...♗xf4?! 29 ♖d7 ♗c7 30 b6! axb6 31 a6! ♗d8 32 a7 ♖a8 33 ♘e5 and wins) 29 f5 ♔e7 30 ♖d5 and ♔g2 followed by a breakthrough on the queenside.

27 ♘d6 ♖a8 28 a5 ♘a4 29 ♘c4! ♘c3 30 ♖e1 ♗xa5 (30...♗f6 31 b6!) **31 ♘xa5 ♘xb5 32 ♖e5 ♘d4 33 ♖xc5 1-0**

A very clean win.

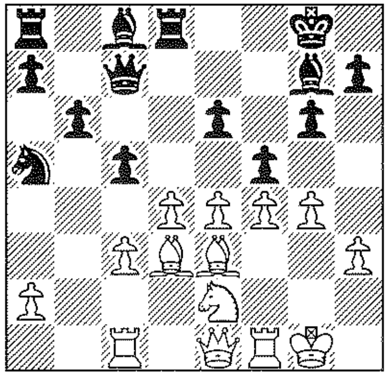
Talking of Stein's liking for set-ups with ♗g2, I recall in my youth how I copied from him for blitz play the amusing variation 1 g3 d5 2 ♗g2 ♘f6 3 d3 c6 4 ♘d2 ♗g4 (after 4...e5 I employed the unusual arrangement 5 e4 ♗d6 6 ♘e2 0-0 7 0-0, then h2-h3 and f2-f4) 5 h3 ♗h5 (at the tournament in Tallinn 1969 Böök played 5...♗f5 against Stein, received the reply 6 e4 and was soon hopelessly placed), and now not 6 ♘gf3 ♘bd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 ♗d6 with equality (Azmaiparashvili-Shirov, Dubai rapidplay 2002), but 6 g4!? ♗g6 7 f4 e6 8 e4, seizing the initiative thanks to the isolation of the g6-bishop. For blitz nothing more was required: it brought good results. During my preparations for the 1979 USSR Team Championship I played numerous blitz games with Bagirov and, after once finding himself in the above set-up, he switched to 2...c6 3 d3 ♗g4. All the same I tried playing 4 h3 ♗h5 5 g4 ♗g6 6 f4 e6 7 e4, but with the knight at g8 there is the reply 7...dxe4 8 dxe4 ♕xd1+ 9 ♔xd1 f5!

In the autumn of 1971 FIDE took the important decision to stage not one, but two Interzonal tournaments and to personally invite the eight top grandmasters at that time to participate (the composition of this eight was decided by a commission specially created for this purpose). Stein acquired a real chance of avoiding suffering again in the Zonal USSR Championship: he merely had to confirm his high class. And he did not have to wait long for an opportunity.

A super-tournament, similar to the tournament of 1967 – the Alekhine Memorial (Moscow, November-December 1971) became the start of a new surge. Five rounds before the end Stein was confidently leading the race with 8½ out of 12, a point ahead of Bronstein, Petrosian and Smyslov, 1½ ahead of Karpov, Tal and Tukmakov, 2 ahead of Korchnoi, and 2½ ahead of world champion Spassky. The latter was naturally eager to make up lost ground, and in the 13th round he engaged the leader in a decisive battle.

Game 70
B.Spassky-L.Stein
Alekhine Memorial Tournament,
Moscow 1971
Grünfeld Defence D87

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 (not repeating 7...0-0 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 – *Game No.61*) **8 ♘e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♕c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8 12 h3 b6 13 f4 e6 14 ♕e1 ♘a5 15 ♗d3 f5! 16 g4!**



16...♗b7!?

The famous game Spassky-Fischer, played the previous year, went 16...fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗b7 18 ♘g3 (*Game No.79*).

17 ♘g3 ♕d7

The point of Black's novelty: 17...fxe4 18 ♗xe4 would have transposed. He could also have considered 17...cxd4!? 18 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 19 cxd4 ♕g7 or 18 cxd4 ♕e7(d7).

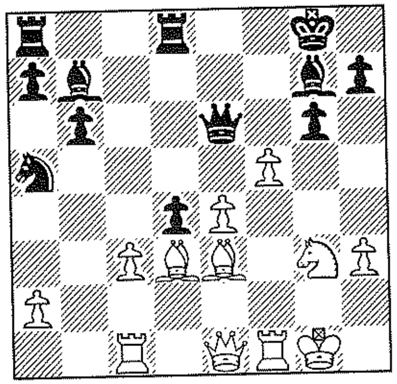
18 gxf5

The source game Scheichel-Adorjan (Hungary 1971) went 18 ♖d1? cxd4 19 ♗b1 ♘c4 (19...♗a6!?) 20 ♗xd4 e5! 21 fxe5 fxg4 with advantage to Black.

18...cxd4

'18...exf5 is more accurate, for example: 19 exf5 (19 ♔h2?! fxe4 20 ♘xe4? ♖e8) 19...cxd4 20 ♗xd4 (20 cxd4? ♖e8) 20...♗xd4+ 21 cxd4 ♕xd4+ 22 ♔h2 ♖e8 and Black's advantage is obvious.' (Kondratiev) In my opinion, this is an optical illusion. As long as the black knight at a5 is out of play, White retains somewhat the better chances: 23 ♗e2! ♕d5?! 24 ♕f2 gxf5 25 ♗h5! ♖ed8 26 ♖g1 ♔f8 27 ♖cd1 etc.

19 fxe6 ♕xe6 20 f5!



Thus, White has burned his boats – his centre has been destroyed and he can only rely on the strength of his attack.

20...♕e7

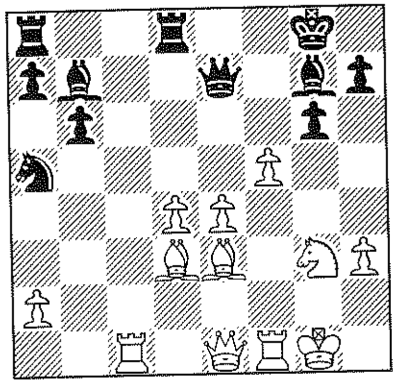
'A turning point. Black should have played 20...gxf5 21 ♗xd4 (21 ♗g5?! dxc3! 22 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 is weaker) 21...♗xd4+ 22 cxd4 ♖xd4, when 23 ♕e3 ♖ad8 24 ♘xf5 ♕g6+ 25 ♔f2(h2) ♖xd3 26 ♘e7+ ♔g7 is to his advantage.' (Kondratiev)

However, White has the improvement 23 ♕c3! ♕g6 (it is also insufficient to play 23...♖xd3 24 ♕xd3 fxe4 25 ♕e2 ♕xh3 26 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♕xe4 ♕g3+ 28 ♕g2 or 25...♕e5 26 ♔h2 ♔h8 27 ♖f5) 24 ♔h2 ♕d6 25 ♖xf5 h6 26 e5! ♕c6 (26...♕b4 27 ♕c7 ♕d2+ 28 ♘e2; 26...♕d8 27 ♖d1 ♖c8 28 ♕d2!) 27 ♕b2 ♕g2+ 28 ♕xg2 ♗xg2 29 ♘h5! ♖xd3 30 ♖c7!, when Black is lost.

But instead of 21...♗xd4+ a better move is 21...fxe4!, for example: 22 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♕xh3 24 ♗xg7 ♕g4+! (24...♔xg7?! 25 ♖c2!) 25 ♔f2 (25 ♔h2 ♕h5+ 26 ♔g2 ♔xg7 with equality) 25...♕h4+ 26 ♘g3 ♔xg7 with equality, or 22 ♘f5 ♗xd4+ 23 cxd4 ♔h8! 24 ♖c7 ♖g8+ 25 ♔h2 ♖g6 with unclear play (26 ♕h4 h6 27 ♗e2 ♖ag8 28 ♗g4 e3!). In reserve White has another attempt to exploit his numerical superiority on the kingside – 21 cxd4!? (instead of 21 ♗xd4) 21...fxe4 22 ♗e2.

In addition, Black could have considered 20...♕d6!? (Kotov) 21 cxd4 (21 ♗g5 dxc3!?) 21...♗xd4 22 ♖d1 ♗xe3+ 23 ♕xe3 ♕d4 with chances of equalising. But, as we will see, the move in the game is also not so bad.

21 cxd4



21...♖xd4?

This is the real turning point! It transpires that with his previous move Stein was intending his favourite idea – the exchange sacrifice for domination of the dark squares. Kondratiev considered it to be forced, 'since 21...♗xd4 22 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 23 f6 is unsatisfactory for Black.' But in fact after 23...♕e5! 24 ♕e3 ♖d7! 25 ♗e2 ♖f7 he has a perfectly defensible position.

A more cunning idea is 23 ♕e3 (Kotov), and if 23...♖ad8?, then 24 f6! with a terrible attack: 24...♕e5? 25 f7+! ♔g7 26 ♖c7 ♖f8 27 ♖f5! (the start of a series of thunderous blows) 27...♕d6 28 ♘h5+! ♔h8 29 ♖d7! ♖xd3 30 ♖xd6 ♖xe3 31 ♖d8!, or 28...gxh5 29 ♖g5+ ♔h8 30 ♕f2! ♕d8 31 ♖e7! and wins. 24...♕f7 is better, but here too Black's position is unenviable after 25 ♗e2!: 25...♖4d7 26 ♖f2! ♖c8?! (26...♕xa2? 27 e5!) 27 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 28 ♘f5! gxf5 29 ♖g2+ ♔h8 30 ♕h6 with crushing threats.

However, after 23 ♕e3 Black is saved by the same immediate centralisation – 23...♕e5! (24 f6 ♖d7) with an unclear game. This would have been far more acceptable for Black than his dubious exchange sacrifice.

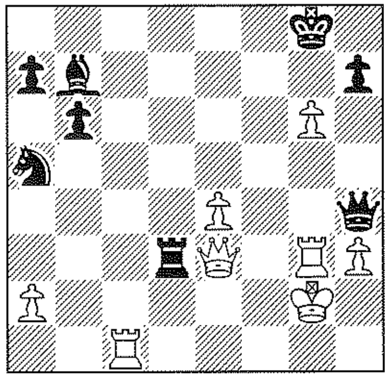
22 ♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 23 ♔g2 ♗e5

If 23...♕g5 (Kotov), then 24 ♕d1! with the idea of ♕g4 is good. 'If Black were quickly able to bring his a5-knight into play, he would have sufficient compensation for the exchange, but 23...♘c6? is not possible in view of 24 ♗c4+ ♔h8 25 fxg6,' writes Kondratiev. 'However, 23...♖d8 was more accurate.' True, after 24 ♖d1 ♗e5 25 ♕e2(e3) the position differs little from one that could have occurred in the game.

24 ♕e3 ♖d8 25 ♖f3

'White is threatening to launch an attack by 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 h4.' (Kondratiev) 25 ♖cd1!? was also good.

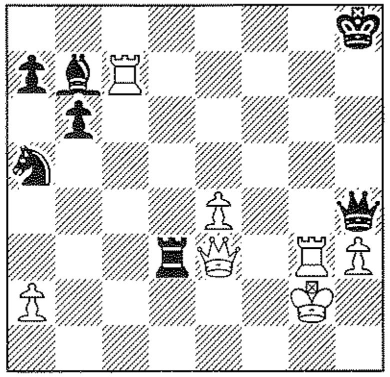
25...♕h4 26 fxg6 ♗xg3? (Black is tempted by an incorrect combination, although after 26...hxg6 it would still not have been easy for White to convert his advantage) **27 ♖xg3 ♖xd3**



28 ♖c8+?!

A time-trouble error in reply, which virtually throws away the win. Kondratiev gives two paths to the goal. The first, prosaic one – 28 ♕xd3 ♗xe4+ 29 ♔h2 ♗xd3 30 ♖c8+ ♔g7 31 ♖c7+ ♔f6 32 g7 would supposedly 'involve technical difficulties,' but this is not so: 32...♗c4 33 ♖xc4 ♕xc4 34 g8♕ ♕e2+ 35 ♖g2 ♕e5+ 36 ♕g3 ♕xg3+ 37 ♔xg3 ♘c4 38 ♔h4! (and ♔h5-h6xh7), or 32...♕f4!? 33 g8♕ ♕xc7 34 ♕g5+ ♔e6 35 ♕e3+ ♕e5 36 ♕xd3 ♘c6 37 ♕xh7! and wins.

The second, elegant path could have led to a mind-boggling position, demonstrating the inexhaustible beauty of chess: 28 gxh7+! ♔h8 29 ♖c8+! ♗xc8 (29...♔xh7 30 ♖c7+ ♔h8 – see below) 30 ♕xd3 ♔xh7 31 e5+ ♔h8 32 ♕g6 ♕e4+ 33 ♕xe4 ♗b7 34 ♕xb7 ♘xb7 35 e6, or 28...♔xh7 29 ♖c7+ ♔h8



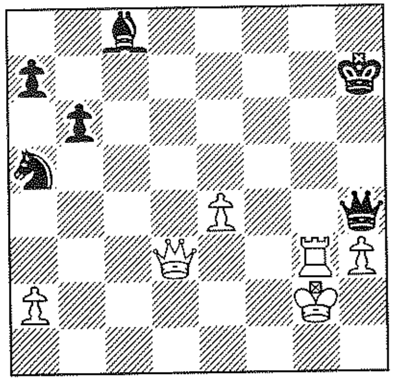
Analysis diagram

30 ♖f3!! (a stunning blow; Kotov's variation 30 ♕xd3? ♗xe4+ 31 ♖f3 ♕g5+! 32 ♔f2 ♗xd3 33 ♖f8+ is insufficient on account of 33...♕g8 34 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 35 ♖xa7 ♘c6 with equality) 30...♗xe4 31 ♔h2!! with a unique win, discovered a quarter of a century before the invasion of computers into the laboratory of chess analysis!

28...♗xc8 29 gxh7+?

But this far from obvious mistake was overlooked by the commentators. A knowledge of higher computer geometry is required to find the win: 29 ♕xd3! hxg6 30 ♕d5+ ♔g7 31 ♖c3! It is hard to believe that Black is defenceless, but after 31...♗xh3+ (31...♗a6 32 ♕e5+!) 32 ♖xh3 ♕g4+ 33 ♖g3 ♕e2+ 34 ♔h3 the king escapes from the checks – 34...♕f1+ 35 ♔g4 ♕e2+ 36 ♔g5 ♕h5+ 37 ♔f4 ♕h4+ 38 ♔f3 etc.

29...♔xh7 30 ♕xd3



30...♕f6! ½-½

It would appear that Spassky missed this defence. White's position is slightly more pleasant, but the worst is over for Black.

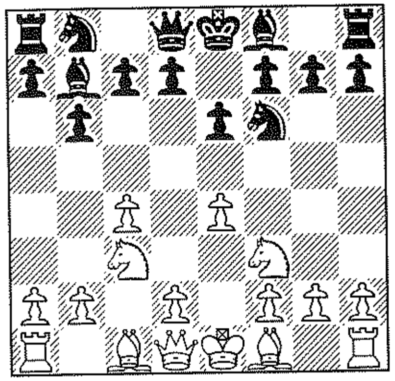
Thus the world champion missed an opportunity to equal the score in his individual meetings with the Lvov grandmaster. Incidentally, Stein had a positive score not only against Spassky (+3-2=9), but also against Tal (+2-1=14), Keres (+2=6) and Polugayevsky (+3-2=3), plus an equal score with Botvinnik (+1-1=2), Smyslov and Petrosian (each +1-1=8). He also had a difficult opponent – his old friend Efim Geller, against whom, however, Fischer also experienced problems.

This miraculous escape enabled Leonid to remain in first place, and only in the very last round did Karpov manage catch up with him. Soon FIDE included both of them in the list of grandmasters who were personally allowed into the Interzonal tournaments. 'I will try my luck again,' declared Stein in an interview. 'At the age of 38, possibly all is not yet lost?!' In the summer of 1973 he was due to play in distant Brazil, and the time came to begin preparations.

From the games of this period I should like to single out his win over Smyslov. Like the games with Keres and Tal given above, it illustrates Stein's colossal chess strength, and his distinctive and refined style of play.

Game 71
L.Stein-V.Smyslov
USSR Team Championship,
Moscow 1972
English Opening A17

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 e4 ♗b7



5 ♕e2!?

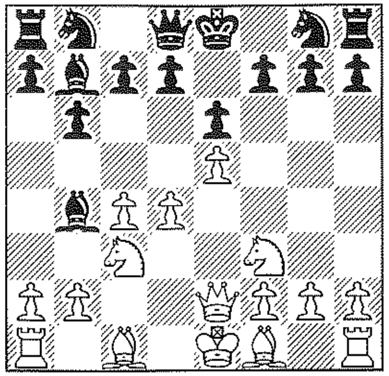
In the spirit of Chigorin's old idea 1 e4 e6 2 ♕e2!? – with the aim of hindering ...d7-d5 and strengthening the effect of e4-e5. Soon afterwards Hübner and Romanishin were to introduce the no less unusual 5 ♗d3!? with the idea of ♗c2 and d2-d4.

5...♗b4

Fighting for the e4-square. One alternative is 5...c5 with the sequel 6 e5 ♘g8 7 d4 (Portisch-Matanovic, Erevan 1965, and Korchnoi-Petrosian, 3rd matchgame, Odessa 1974), or 6 g3 ♘c6 7 ♗g2 (Uhlmann-Spasov, Cienfuegos 1973). Another possibility is 5...d6 6 d4 ♗e7 7 g3 0-0 8 ♗g2 c5 9 e5 ♘fd7 with equalising chances (Vaganian-Polugayevsky, 42nd USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974).

6 e5 ♘g8 7 d4

After 7 g3 ♘c6 8 ♗g2 ♘d4 9 ♕d3 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 11 ♕xf3 ♘e7 12 0-0 (12 d4!?) 12...♘c6! 13 ♕e4 0-0 14 ♘e2 f5 15 exf6 ♕xf6 16 d4 e5! Black has an excellent game (Korchnoi-Portisch, 1st matchgame, Bad Kissingen 1983).



7...d6?!

On encountering a surprise, Smyslov makes a natural but inaccurate move. This attack on the pawn chain at its most fortified point does not achieve anything. Instead 7...♘e7! with the idea of ...d7-d5 is correct, as was finally demonstrated by Karpov in his match with Korchnoi (1974), for example: 8 ♗d2 (8 a3 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 d5!, and White must play 10 exd6 or resign himself to a weakness on the light squares) 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 d5 (3rd game), or 8 ♕d3 d5 9 exd6 cxd6 (9...♕xd6!?) 10 a3 ♗xc3+ 11 ♕xc3 0-0 (7th game), but it is even better to play 11...♘d7! and ...♖c8 with chances of seizing the initiative thanks to the weakness of the light squares, especially c4 (Uhlmann-Karpov, Skopje 1976).

8 a3

Subsequently it transpired that it is better to play 8 ♗d2! dxe5 9 dxe5 ♘a6 10 0-0-0 ♕e7 11 g3 0-0-0 12 ♗g2 ♘c5 13 ♗g5 f6 14 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 15 ♖d1 ♕e8 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♗d2 ♘e7 18 ♘e4! ♘xe4 19 ♗xb4 ♘c6 20 ♗a3 with an advantage (Korchnoi-Karpov, 1st matchgame, Moscow 1974).

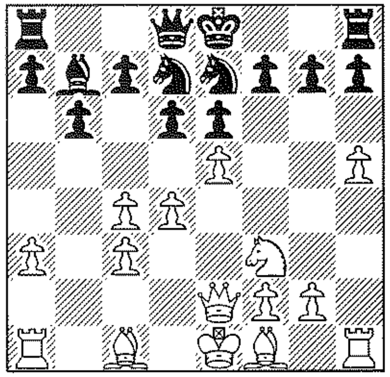
8...♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♘e7 10 h4!

The start of a sharp plan, aimed at opening up the game for the pair of white bishops. 'It appears that White is challenging the classical rules: his pieces are not yet developed, his centre is insecure, his king is in the centre, his rooks are not connected, and the rook's pawn, like an undisciplined soldier, sets off on a risky march.' (Gufeld, Lazarev)

10...♘d7 (here too 10...d5!? was preferable with the idea of 11 cxd5 ♗a6 12 c4 exd5 or 12 ♕c2 ♗xf1 13 ♔xf1 exd5 14 h5 h6 15 ♔g1 0-0 16 a4 ♘bc6 17 ♕d3 ♕d7 with equality)

11 h5!

A bold pawn sacrifice.



11...♗xf3?

Black sticks to the intended plan of destroying the white pawn centre, but it was essential to include 11...h6. After 12 ♗f4 ♗xf3 (12...dxe5 13 ♘xe5 0-0 14 ♖h3 favours White) 13 ♕xf3 dxe5 14 dxe5 c6 15 ♖d1 ♕c7 16 ♗e2 0-0-0 17 0-0 White's position is better, but not so much as in the game.

12 ♕xf3 dxe5

If now 12...h6, then 13 ♕g4! is strong, since the counterattack 13...dxe5?! 14 ♕xg7 ♖g8 15 ♕xh6 ♘f5 16 ♕d2 exd4 17 cxd4 ♖g4 merely increases White's advantage: 18 ♗b2 ♖e4+ 19 ♗e2, while if 13...♘f5, then 14 ♗d3! (Gufeld, Lazarev) with the sequel 14...0-0 15 exd6 cxd6 16 ♕f3 and g2-g4-g5 with a powerful attack.

13 h6! gxh6?!

Even such a legendary figure as Smyslov fails to sense the dynamics of this unusual position. The lesser evil was 13...g6 14 dxe5

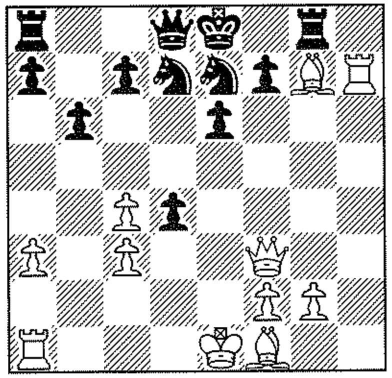
0-0 (14...♘xe5? 15 ♕f6) and if 15 ♗g5, then 15...♘xe5! 16 ♕f6 ♘f5 17 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 18 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 with some compensation for the exchange and drawing chances.

14 ♗xh6?!

Forcing the play, but Black would have been set more difficult problems by the pressurising 14 ♗d3! ♘g6 15 ♗e4 ♖b8 16 ♗c6 ♘e7 (if 16...exd4?! 17 cxd4 ♘e7, both 18 ♗f4 and 18 ♗e4 ♘g6 19 ♗xh6 ♕f6 20 ♕e3 are good) 17 dxe5 ♘xc6 18 ♕xc6 ♕e7 19 ♗e3!, and although the unaesthetic manoeuvre 19...♔d8!? (intending ...♔c8) would have enabled him to avoid an immediate rout, White has a clear advantage after 20 ♕e4.

14...exd4 (after the incautious 14...♘f5?! 15 ♗g5 f6 Black would have come under a crushing attack: 16 g4! ♘xd4 17 cxd4 fxg5 18 ♖h6 ♔e7 19 d5 exd5 20 ♖d1! d4 21 ♗g2 etc.)

15 ♗g7 ♖g8 16 ♖xh7



16...♘f5?

After this move the dashing assault by the white pieces achieves a stunning effect. Only 16...♘f8! 17 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 would have maintained hopes of a successful defence: 18 0-0-0 (18 cxd4 ♕xd4 with equality) 18...c5! 19 ♗d3 (it is no better to play 19 cxd4 cxd4 20 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 21 ♕xa8+ ♔d7 22 ♕xf8 ♕a1+ or 20 c5 ♕d5 21 ♗b5+ ♔d8 22 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 23 ♕xa8+ ♘c8) 19...♖b8 20 ♗c2 (20 ♕f6 ♕d6; 20 ♕f4 ♖c8) 20...b5! etc.

17 ♗xd4 c5 18 g4! (now the attack develops unhindered) **18...cxd4**

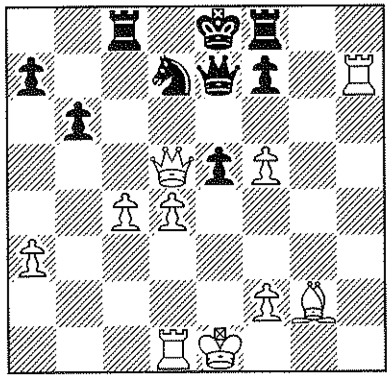
If 18...♘d6, then 19 ♗g7! ♖c8 20 ♕f4! e5 21 ♕h6 ♘e4 22 ♗g2 ♘g5 23 ♖h8 (Dvoretsky) 23...♖xh8 24 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 25 ♕h4! ♔e8 26 ♕h5 or 26 0-0-0 etc.

19 gxf5 e5

It was no good to play 19...exf5 20 0-0-0! ♘f6 21 ♖h3 ♘e4 22 ♕xf5 ♕g5+ 23 ♕xg5 ♘xg5 24 ♖g3 ♔e7 25 cxd4. The alternative 19...♘e5? is also bad after 20 ♕e4 dxc3 21 ♖a2! (apart from this move, which was pointed out by Stein, 21 ♖d1 c2 22 ♖c1! is also possible) 21...f6 22 f4! exf5 23 ♕h1! ♘f7 24 ♕b7 and wins.

Yet another defensive try – 19...♘f6 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 ♖h6 dxc3 – is refuted by 22 ♕xc3 (or even 22 ♖d1 c2 23 ♖c1!) 22...♔f7 23 ♖d1 ♕e7 24 c5!! bxc5 (24...♖ad8 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 c6) 25 ♖xf6+! ♕xf6 26 ♖d7+ ♔g6 27 ♗d3+! ♔g5 28 ♕c1+! ♔g4 (28...♕f4 29 ♕xc5+ e5 30 ♕e7+ ♕f6 31 f4+!) 29 ♗e2+ ♔f5 30 ♕xc5+ e5 31 ♕c2+ ♔g5 32 ♕h7! (Inarkiev).

20 ♕d5! ♖f8 21 cxd4 ♖c8 22 ♖d1 (22 c5!? Gufeld, Lazarev; 22 ♖a2!? Dvoretsky) **22...♕e7 23 ♗g2!** (vacating the f1-square for the king)



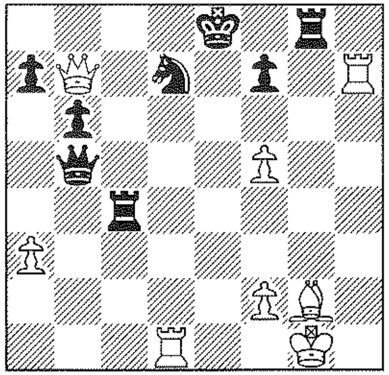
23...♖g8

Black also vacates a square for his king, but this does not solve his problems. This is also true after 23...exd4+ 24 ♔f1 ♕c5 (24...♘f6 25 ♕b5+ ♕d7 26 ♖h6! ♖c5 27 ♕b2! Dvoretsky; 24...♕xa3 25 ♖h4!) 25 ♕e4+ ♔d8 26 ♖xd4 ♕xa3 27 ♕h4+ ♔c7 (27...♕e7 28 f6) 28 ♕f4+ ♔d8 29 ♗d5 etc.

24 ♕b7! ♖xc4 (24...♖b8 25 ♕xa7; 24...♖d8 25 dxe5!; 24...exd4+ 25 ♔f1 ♕c5 26 ♗d5 ♖f8 27 ♖xf7!) **25 dxe5**

25 ♕a8+! ♕d8 26 ♕d5 is more accurate, but the move in the game also does not throw away the win.

25...♕xe5+ 26 ♔f1 ♕b5 27 ♔g1!



27...♕c6

Black's options become increasingly narrower and more depressing: 27...♖xg2+ 28 ♕xg2 ♕xf5 29 ♕g8+ ♘f8 (29...♔c7 30 ♖xf7+!) 30 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 31 ♕xf8+ ♔c7 32 ♖xf7+, or 27...♖cg4 28 ♕c8+ ♔e7 29 ♖xd7+ ♕xd7 30 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 31 ♕xd7+ ♔f8 32 f6 and the curtain comes down.

28 ♕xc6 (28 ♖h8!) **28...♖xc6 29 ♖h8!** (the concluding tactical stroke) **29...♖cg6 30 fxg6 ♖xh8 31 ♗c6 ♖g8 32 ♗xd7+ ♔e7 33 ♗f5 fxg6 34 ♖d7+ ♔f6 35 ♗d3 1-0**

Early in July 1973 Stein was due to fly with his colleagues to the European Team Championship, and then on to the Interzonal tournament in Brazil (for which he had already been given the necessary vaccinations). But the team waited in vain for him at the airport: the grandmaster had died of a heart attack... Stein was not yet 39 years old. His sudden death stunned the entire chess world. Even the world champion Fischer, who had disappeared from view, sent a telegram to Moscow: 'I am shocked by the untimely death of Leonid Stein – a brilliant grandmaster and a good friend. I express my sympathy to his family and to the chess community.'

His short biography is genuinely tragic, since this talented player had to face so many administrative obstacles. It is a great pity that we did not see a match between Stein and, for example, Tal or Spassky. It is evident that he had one sure way of qualifying for the Candidates events: he simply needed to move to another country. But alas...

I remember how at the international tournament in Baku (1980) Eduard Gufeld was effusively telling me about his new book *Leonid Stein*. At the end, after cautiously looking around, he quietly whispered in my ear: 'You know, in 1973 Stein was stronger than Karpov!' and promptly hurried away.

The Hand of Bondarevsky

Thus, in 1961 Spassky again failed to qualify for the Interzonal tournament. This was a very difficult period in the biography of the talented young player, who found himself sidelined from the chess scene. 'Another might have abandoned chess altogether, never mind abandon any dream of the world crown,' Bronstein later wrote. 'But Spassky decided to proceed all over again along the thorny path and set about implementing a deeply conceived training plan.' The experienced grandmaster Igor Bondarevsky became his long-term trainer.

This proved to be a very successful tandem and operated for about ten years – a rare example of such a fruitful and lengthy collaboration (comparable perhaps only with the Petrosian-Boleslavsky tandem). Here it is important that the trainer and his protégé should be psychologically compatible, and then all the teacher's unrealised playing potential, all his secret ambitions, can be passed on 'by inheritance'. That is how it was for Spassky with Bondarevsky, an outstanding player who showed great promise in the 1940s.

Igor Zakharovich dreamed of developing a champion – and he forced Boris to work, although the latter had the reputation of being a luxury-loving and lazy person. Spassky's disinclination to overstrain himself was legendary, but Bondarevsky managed to break it. And the day came when Boris decided: it's time to become world champion! This is how I picture things – feeling in a good mood, he suddenly says thoughtfully to Bondarevsky: 'What do you think, pater, isn't it time for me to become world champion?' (Spassky affectionately called his trainer 'pater' – the latter was indeed like a father to him).

I think that this is how it all began. The 'pater', naturally, did not object: Spassky's natural strength and talent were colossal – it only remained to organise his chess work correctly and competently regulate his strengths (both physical and psychological) for a lengthy campaign. That was how his many years of ascent to the top began, the first few of which are described in Bondarevsky's interesting and instructive book *Boris Spassky Sturmuet Olimp* (Boris Spassky storms Olympus).

The results of this titanic work were not long in coming. Spassky began playing with much more stability and captured the 29th USSR Championship, thus passing, in the words of his trainer, his school-leaving examination. But Boris had to begin the next world championship cycle from a semi-final of the 31st USSR Championship. And he passed brilliantly through the entire cycle – the longest in the history of Candidates events! Spassky played 98 qualifying games on his way to a match for the world crown: the semi-final and final of the USSR Championship (both without defeat), the Zonal 'tournament of seven', the Interzonal, and then matches with Keres, Geller and Tal.

There was an especially dramatic finish to the marathon Interzonal tournament in Amsterdam (1964), where, I should remind you, only three of the five outstanding Soviet grandmasters could be among the six qualifiers for the Candidates. After scoring eight successive wins(!) in the middle of the tournament, Spassky burst into the leading group. But his rivals did not drop back and when Boris lost unexpectedly to Larsen in the penultimate, 22nd round, the situation suddenly became much more complicated: the following day, to finish ahead of Stein or Tal, he had to win 'to order'.

In the first Candidates match Boris was paired with the most experienced and venerable opponent – Paul Keres. And, it seems to me, this clash already demonstrated that in the ultra-tough struggle, typical of short matches, Boris had no equals. Although Keres won the first game with Black, there was no great battle in the match: after missing a win in the second game, Spassky then gained three successive victories. Moreover, two of them were in his opponent's favourite opening – the Ruy Lopez (this had never happened to Keres before: to lose both with White, and with Black!). Then Paul Petrovich gained one point back, but in the last, 10th game youth prevailed and the match concluded 6-4 in Spassky's favour.

After this there followed a textbook crushing of Efim Geller: 5½-2½. Yet at that time Geller was by no means a 'gift': in his quarter-final match he had overwhelmed Smyslov by the same score. But Spassky did not allow his opponent any chances!

And then came the final – a difficult match with Mikhail Tal. The ex-world champion's health had improved and he was again experiencing an upsurge. In addition, he was clearly superior to Spassky in match experience. This was a very interesting match, a genuine battle of giants! After losing the second game with White, Boris found himself in a difficult situation and step-by-step he began trying to change the course of the match. He played every game to a finish, squeezing out every chance, holding on in slightly inferior positions and winning in slightly better ones. Psychologically, Bondarevsky had prepared him excellently!

Spassky suppressed White's activity, by playing the now fashionable – following his example! – Marshall Attack. A purely positional pawn sacrifice, simply in order to change the character of the play, to seize the initiative – here too one senses the hand of Bondarevsky. This was fatal for Tal: he was forced to play on alien territory, where he felt much less confident. In the end he replaced 8 c3 with the 'sidelines' 8 a4 and 8 h3, but he also found this soul-destroying and suffered two defeats.

In the middle of the match there was a very tenacious struggle. Spassky held his opponent at a distance, not allowing him to attack and imposing complicated strategic play. The turning point came in the ninth game, where Tal had some advantage, but the position itself did not appeal to him, and when time-trouble set in he lost the thread of the play. Spassky played very well in such 'Spanish' positions, and it was not very difficult for him to convert things into a win. It is probable that after this, overwhelmed by his opponent's patience and self-control, Tal no longer believed at heart that he could retrieve his losses. It would seem that he lost his nerve. He suddenly began playing 'without aim or direction', as in the good old 1950s. However, sitting opposite him now was a quite different player, against whom all this trickery did not work. In the end Spassky won 7-4 and qualified for a match with Petrosian.

But here the challenger committed a typical mistake (which has already been mentioned in the chapter on Petrosian). Apparently it is hard to appreciate that Candidates matches are one thing, but a match with the world champion is something quite different: the current champion is tougher than the strongest challenger! A similar mistake was also made, incidentally, by me in 1984 and by Short in 1993. Alas, a realisation of the difference usually comes too late, when the score is already dismal... It seems to me that the same thing happened with Spassky. While fighting worthily and showing himself to be not inferior to his opponent chess-wise, he was nevertheless unable to find the key to Petrosian, to breach his solid defence.

After losing a match for the world championship at the age of 29, Boris was forced to pass though another exhausting cycle, and he did this brilliantly. But first, in the summer of 1966, he won a super-tournament in Santa Monica, crushing Fischer in splendid style (Petrosian scored only 50 per cent here). The Spassky years were truly beginning!

The collaboration with Bondarevsky continued. He and his trainer were sure that they were following the right course, and that the next match with Petrosian would be won. But first three Candidates matches had to be won. Fischer, incidentally, was not among them: the formidable American had pulled out of the Interzonal in Sousse (1967), when he had 8½ out of 10. But, even had he qualified for the Candidates matches, it is unlikely that he would have been able to defeat the Spassky of that time, who still retained great energy and flexibility of thinking.

Boris Vasilievich was again drawn against some difficult opponents: in the quarter-final – Geller, in the semi-final – Larsen, and in the final – Korchnoi. But, paradoxically, all of these matches were dictated by Spassky and ended with an advantage of three points! Such confident victories were based on correctly constructed strategy. The trainer's recommendations and Boris's innate perception enabled him to play each match in a manner that was the most unpleasant for the given opponent. And since the opponents strongly differed from one another, everyone began talking about the universal nature of Spassky's style.

In the match with Geller (Sukhumi, April 1968) he played quite differently than in 1965. On that occasion he had prevailed in a classical, purely positional style, whereas now he created tense, irrational positions with his sights set on the enemy king. It is here that the secret of Geller's defeat is concealed: he had spent a long time preparing for one opponent, but encountered a quite different one! As White, Spassky avoided opening disputes in fashionable set-ups (Efim Petrovich was a well-known openings expert), while with Black he accurately suppressed his opponent's attacking impulses with the help of the French Defence.

With uncommon tenacity he played the non-topical Closed Variation against the Sicilian and thereby conducted the opening duel on his own territory. He as though conceded the white pieces without a fight, but imposed on Geller, who liked concrete, calculating positions, play of a leisurely character that was unpleasant for him. And, as a result, Geller suffered a genuine tragedy, which surprised all the fans and eye-witnesses of the match: after achieving, at the cost of great effort, winning positions in the second and fourth games, he both times fell victim to a mating attack. The subtle estimation of Bondarevsky and Spassky fully justified itself!

Game 72
B.Spassky-E.Geller
Candidates Match,
Sukhumi 1968, 4th game
Sicilian Defence B25

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 d6

Geller was obviously aiming for the variations with 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 a6 or 5...♘c6, with which he had twice defeated Fischer in 1967.

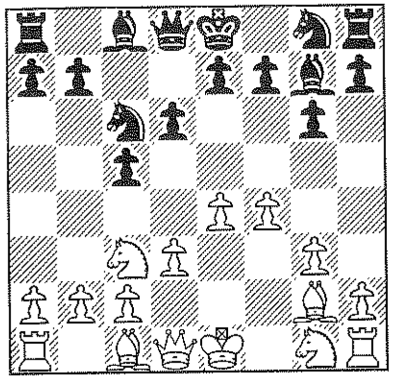
In principle, a more radical way to play is 2...e6 3 g3 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 ♘ge2 d4 with equality, as in the games Spassky-Korchnoi (5th matchgame, Kiev 1968) and Spassky-Kasparov (Bugojno 1982). Although then White can transpose into other variations of the Sicilian by 3 ♘f3 and 4 d4.

3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 g6 5 d3

'Although Boris had already tried playing the Closed Variation in his match with Petrosian, this nevertheless came as something of a surprise to me.' (Geller) 'I took account of the fact that Geller does not like defending.' (Spassky)

5...♗g7 6 f4

After 6 ♗e3 (6 ♘ge2 e5! – *Volume 2, Game No.108*) Black has a satisfactory choice between 6...e6 or 6...♖b8 7 ♕d2 b5 8 ♘ge2 ♘d4 9 0-0 e6 10 ♘d1 ♘e7 with equality (Spassky-Portisch, 11th and 14th matchgames, Mexico 1980).



6...♘f6

In the 8th game Geller gained equal chances after 6...e6 7 ♘f3 ♘ge7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 ♗d7 10 ♖b1 ♖c8 11 ♗d2 ♘d4 12 ♘e2 ♗a4 13 b3 ♗c6 14 c4 ♘xf3+ 15 ♗xf3 d5, but Spassky continued the dispute in his next match with Larsen: 9 ♗d2 ♖b8 10 ♖b1 b5 11 a3 a5?! (11...f5 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 with equality, 7th game; 11...♕d7!? Spassky-J.Polgar, Monaco 1994) 12 a4! b4 13 ♘b5 d5 14 c4!, killing Black's counterplay (3rd game).

Years later the 10th world champion's favourite weapon misfired in important games with Portisch: 9 ♖b1 b6!? 10 ♗d2 ♗b7 11 ♘e2 ♕d7 12 g4 f5 13 gxf5 exf5 14 c4 ♘d8! 15 ♘c3 ♘e6! 16 ♘g5 ♘xg5 17 fxg5 ♖f7! 18 ♕f3?! ♖af8 19 ♕h3 ♕d8! 20 exf5 ♗c8! 21 ♘e4 ♗d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♘xf5 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8!... 0-1 (1st matchgame, Mexico 1980), and 9 ♗e3 ♘d4 10 ♖b1 (Spassky later switched to 10 ♗f2) 10...♖b8 11 ♘e2 ♘xf3+ 12 ♗xf3 b6 13 g4?! f5 14 ♘g3 ♗b7 15 gxf5 exf5 16 c4 ♕d7 17 ♕d2 ♖be8 18 ♖be1 ♘c6 19 ♗g2 (19 exf5 ♘d4!) 19...♘d4 20 ♔h1 fxe4! 21 dxe4?! h5!... 0-1 (Toluca Interzonal 1982).

At one time 6...e5 was fashionable (Larsen-Portisch, 1st matchgame, Rotterdam 1977 – cf. p.159), but then White demonstrated the strength of the plan with 7 ♘h3!, for example: 7...exf4 8 ♗xf4 ♘ge7 9 0-0 h6 10 ♖b1 0-0 11 a3 ♗e6 12 ♗e3 ♘e5 13 ♘f4 ♗d7 14 ♔h1 ♖c8 15 ♕d2 ♔h7 16 h3 ♗c6 17 g4 ♕d7 18 ♖f2 with the initiative (Spassky-Portisch, 13th matchgame, Geneva 1977), while after 7...♘ge7 8 0-0 ♘d4 (8...0-0? 9 f5! gxf5 10 ♕h5 with an attack) both the sharp 9 f5 gxf5 10 ♕h5!? (Spassky-Hort, Bugojno 1978) and the quiet 9 ♖f2!? (Spassky-Timman, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978) are possible.

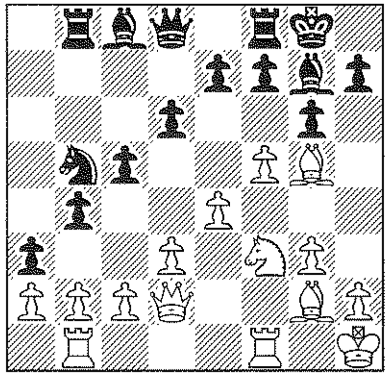
7 ♘f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖b8

Another idea is 8...♗g4!? (8...♘e8 and ...f7-f5 is more solid, but more passive) 9 h3 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♘d4 11 ♗g2 ♖c8 with equality.

9 h3!

'Naturally, the outcome of the opening in the 2nd game did not satisfy Spassky and Bondarevsky, and they found a new path. The increased control of d4 greatly hinders Black's counterplay on the queenside.' (Geller)

In the 2nd game after the direct 9 ♘h4?! ♘d4! 10 f5 b5 11 ♗g5 b4 12 ♘b1 ♘d7 13 ♘d2 ♘e5 14 ♔h1 a5 (14...♗b7!? with the idea of ...d6-d5) 15 ♖b1 a4 16 ♘hf3 ♘exf3 (16...♗a6!?) 17 ♘xf3 ♘b5! 18 ♕d2 a3 (18...gxf5!? 19 ♗h6 f6 20 ♘h4 fxe4 21 ♗xe4 d5 is also not bad) Black seized the initiative: he has already laid bare the entire queenside, whereas White has no real attack.



Analysis diagram

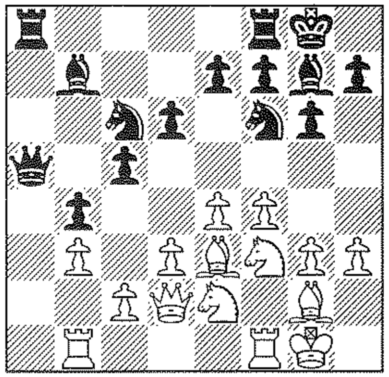
At this critical moment, Spassky complicated the play with an unexpected exchange sacrifice, which sharply changed the direction of the game, and was especially unpleasant for Geller: 19 bxa3! ♘xa3 20 ♖be1!? ♗c3 21 ♕f2 ♗xe1 (21...♘b5!?) 22 ♖xe1 f6 (22...♘b5!?) 23 ♗h6 ♖f7 24 g4 e6 (apart from 24...e5, 24...♘b5 and ...♖a8 was again good) 25 ♘h4 g5?! (25...♕e8 26 ♗c1!; 25...♘b5!? 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♘xg6 ♖bb7) 26 ♘f3 exf5 27 gxf5 ♔h8 28 h4 g4 29 ♘h2 g3?! (Geller was already in severe time-trouble!) 30 ♕xg3 ♘xc2 31 ♖g1 ♗b7? (a fatal error; after 31...♖bb7! 32 ♗f3 ♘d4 33 ♗h5 ♖fc7 everything was still unclear) 32 ♗f3 ♕d7 33 ♗h5 ♖e7 34 ♘g4 ♖g8 35 ♕f2 ♘d4 36 ♘xf6 ♖xg1+ 37 ♕xg1 1-0.

One is impressed by the calmness with which Spassky played a clear exchange down, gradually increasing the pressure. White did not even have any direct targets to attack! This game showed that Geller found it difficult in positions where his king was in danger. So why shouldn't White repeat the scenario, and in an improved version?!

9...b5 10 a3! (but not 10 ♗e3 b4 11 ♘e2 ♘d7 12 ♖b1 ♕a5 with equality) **10...a5 11 ♗e3 b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 ♘e2 ♗b7 14 ♕d2?!** (14 b3! is more accurate, as in the 6th game) **14...♖a8 15 ♖ab1 ♕a5**

Black again has an active position. 15...♕c7!? is also not bad.

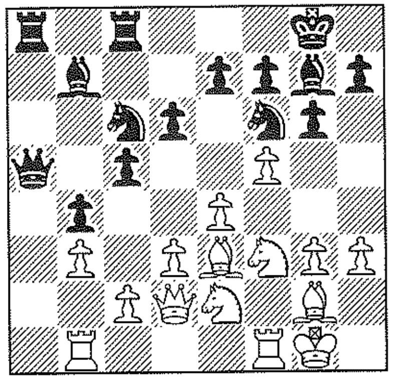
16 b3



16...♖fc8

Missing the amusing possibility 16...d5!? 17 e5 d4 18 ♗f2 ♘d5. According to Geller, here Black has a positional advantage, but in my opinion, there is a double-edged struggle in prospect after 19 ♘g5 e6 20 ♘e4.

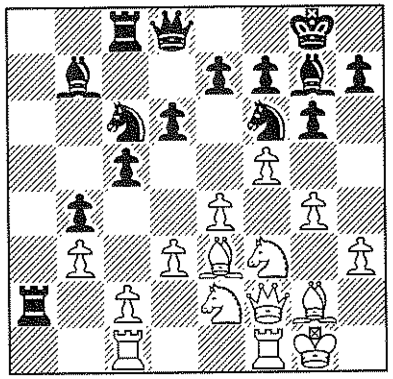
17 f5



17...♕b6?!

17...♕d8! at once was more accurate, with an excellent game, for example: 18 e5?! ♘d5! 19 e6 fxe6 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 ♘g5 ♕d7 etc.

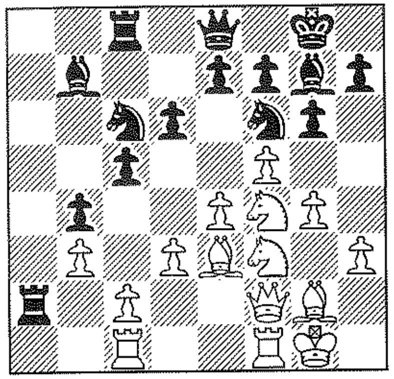
18 g4 ♖a2 19 ♘c1 ♖a5 20 ♕f2! (control of d4!) **20...♕c7 21 ♘e2 ♖a2 22 ♖bc1 ♕d8**



23 ♘f4

If 23 fxg6 hxg6 24 e5 Black loses with 24...♘d5? 25 ♘g5 ♘xe5 26 ♕h4 ♗f6 27 ♕h7+ ♔f8 on account of 28 ♗xd5! (28 ♗f4 ♘xf4 29 ♘xf4 ♗xg2 30 ♘xg6+ ♔e8 31 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 32 ♕xf7+ ♔d7 33 ♕f5+ ♔c6 34 ♔xg2 ♕d7 is inferior) 28...♗xd5 29 ♘f4 e6 30 ♘xf7, but after 24...♘xe5 25 ♘xe5 ♗xg2 26 ♘xf7 ♕f8 27 ♕xg2 ♕xf7 28 ♗d2 the situation is unclear.

23...♕e8



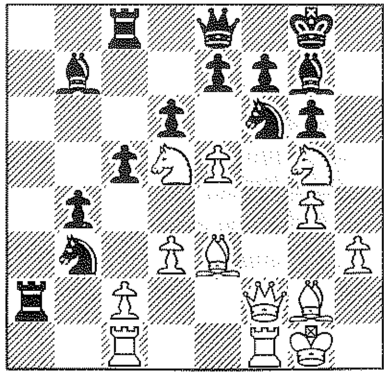
24 ♘g5?

'Initially I was planning 24 g5 ♘d7 25 h4 with dangerous threats on the kingside. However, this seemed to me to be too slow, and I began playing more "actively" and hastily, but this did not achieve anything.' (Spassky) I also do not like 24 g5. Instead 24 ♕h4! looks stronger, for example: 24...♘d4 25 ♘xd4 cxd4 26 ♗xd4 ♖cxc2 27 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 28 g5 ♘h5 29 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 30 f6 exf6 31 gxf6 ♕d8! 32 ♔h1 ♘e8 33 ♘e6 ♕c8 34 ♘f8 ♘xf6 35 ♘xg6 hxg6 36 ♕xf6 with sharp play.

24...♘d4! (now the c2-pawn begins to 'creak') **25 fxg6 hxg6 26 ♘d5?**

After a long think White makes another 'devious' move, having apparently convinced himself that he has no compensation for the pawn after the normal attacking continuation 26 ♕h4 (26 ♗xd4? ♘xg4! 27 ♕h4 ♗xd4+ 28 ♔h1 ♘f6 29 ♘d5 ♗xd5 30 exd5 ♔g7) 26...♖xc2 (but not 26...♘xc2? 27 ♖f2 or 26...e5? 27 ♘xg6! ♘e2+ 28 ♔h2 fxg6 29 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♖f1 ♘f4 32 ♗xf4) 27 ♖xc2 ♘xc2 28 ♗d2 ♗c6! (28...♘d4? 29 e5) 29 ♘d5 ♗xd5 30 exd5 ♘d4.

26...♘xb3 (it was simpler to play 26...♗xd5! 27 exd5 ♘xb3 28 ♖cd1 ♘d4 with a clear advantage) **27 e5!**



'The only chance, but an excellent one, of confusing matters and continuing the struggle.' (Geller) Black begins to imagine various traps and dangers...

27...♘xc1?

It was bad to play 27...♘xd5? 28 ♕h4 ♘f6 29 exf6 exf6 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♗f4 ♖d8 32 ♖ce1 ♕xe1! (32...♕d7 33 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 34 ♘e4 ♖xc2 35 ♗h6 and wins) 33 ♖xe1 ♗xg2 34 ♔xg2 ♖xc2+ 35 ♔g3 ♘d4 36 ♘e4 ♘e2+ 37 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 38 ♗h6! (but not 38 ♔f3? ♖xe4! 39 dxe4 b3 40 ♗h6 ♗xh6 41 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 42 ♕d2 ♖b8) 38...♗xh6 39 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 40 ♕f4, winning. However, 27...dxe5! 28 ♘xf6+ exf6 29 ♗xb7 ♘xc1 30 ♗xc1 ♖d8 31 ♘e4 ♕e7 32 ♗c6 b3 would have retained a big advantage.

28 ♗xc1?

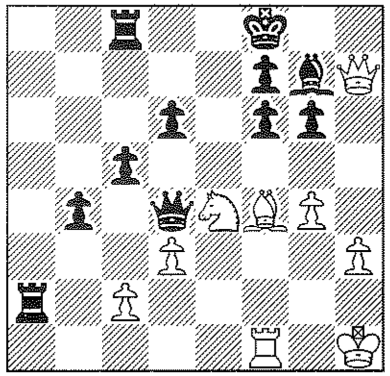
'After this White's defeat was inevitable. The correct move was 28 exf6! exf6 29 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 30 ♗xb7 with an intricate position. In any event, Black had a drawing variation: 30...♖xc2! *(both 30...♘e2+? 31 ♔h1! ♗xg5 32 ♗xg5 ♖xc2 33 ♗d5, and here 32...♖c7?! 33 ♗d5 ♖xc2 34 ♗f6 g5 35 ♗xg5 ♘d4 36 ♕f6 ♘e6 37 ♖e1 ♖a7 38 ♖xe6 fxe6 39 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 40 ♔g1! c4 41 ♕g6+ ♔f8 42 ♕h6+ ♔g8 43 ♗f6 are bad – G.K.)* 31 ♕xf6 ♘e2+ 32 ♔h2 ♖c7 33 ♗g2 ♕xe3 34 ♕d8+ ♔g7 35 ♕f6+ with perpetual check.' (Geller) But even better is 33...♕e5+! 34 ♕xe5 dxe5 with a clearly superior endgame.

28...♗xd5 29 ♗xd5 (or 29 exf6 ♗xg2 30 fxg7 ♗xf1 31 ♕h4 ♔xg7 and wins)

29...♘xd5 30 ♕h4 ♘f6! 31 exf6 exf6 32 ♕h7+ ♔f8 33 ♘e4 ♕e5

Parrying the threat of 34 ♗h6. 'Here I thought about resigning.' (Spassky)

34 ♗f4 ♕d4+ 35 ♔h1

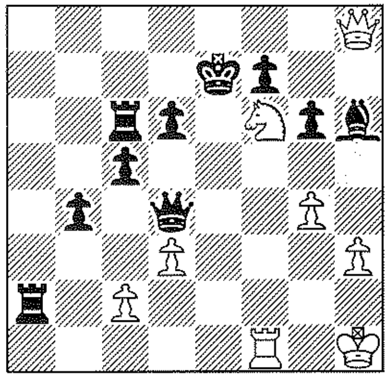


35...♖c6??

'A terrible mistake in a winning position.' (Spassky) 'Incomprehensible! In the opponent's time-trouble, with some 40 minutes in reserve, Black rejects the simple 35...♖d8. After calculating the winning variation 36 g5 ♖a1 37 ♖xa1 ♕xa1+ 38 ♔g2 fxg5 39 ♗xg5 ♖e8, at the last moment I "saw" that with the rook on c6 I could achieve even more with 39...d5.' (Geller)

Black's tragedy is that now he does not even have a draw! However, in this there is some kind of higher justice, as shown also by the 6th game, and indeed the entire course of the match...

36 ♗h6! ♗xh6 37 ♕h8+ ♔e7 38 ♘xf6



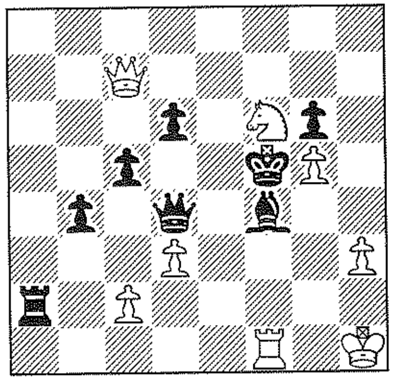
38...♗f4

'The only way to save the game was by 38...♗f8 39 ♖e1+ ♕e5 *(39...♔d8 40 ♕xf8+ ♔c7 41 ♕xf7+ ♔b6 42 ♘d7+ – G.K.)* 40 ♖xe5+ dxe5 41 ♘d5+ ♔e6.' (Geller) This is indeed more tenacious, but even so it would not have saved Black in view of 40 ♘d5+! ♔e8 (40...♔e6 41 ♕f6+ ♔xd5 42 ♕xf7+) 41 ♖xe5+ dxe5 42 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 43 ♘xb4! ♗d6 (43...cxb4 44 ♕d5+) 44 ♕f6.

39 g5! (both the only move, and sufficient!) **39...♔e6 40 ♕e8+ ♔f5 41 ♕xf7! ♖c7**

The sealed move. It is a paradox, but there is no defence: 41...♔xg5? 42 h4+ ♔xh4 43 ♕xg6. Black is forced to give up a rook.

42 ♕xc7



42...♔xg5

'In my adjournment analysis I saw that 42...♖a1, which had been planned on the 38th move, encounters a problem-like stroke: 43 ♕c8+ ♔e5 (43...♔xg5 44 ♘e4+ ♕xe4+ 45 dxe4 ♖xf1+ 46 ♔g2 and the bishop is lost) 44 ♘g4+ ♔d5 45 c4+! and Black loses his rook.' (Geller) Here 42...♖xc2 43 ♕c8+ ♔xg5 44 ♘e4+ ♔h6 45 ♕f8+ does not help either.

43 ♕e7!

Successfully completing the pursuit of the king. 43 ♘e4+ ♔h6 44 ♕f7 was less straightforward due to 44...♕e3! 45 ♖xf4 ♖a1+ 46 ♖f1 ♕xh3+ 47 ♔g1 ♕g4+ 48 ♔h2! ♕e2+ 49 ♖f2 ♕h5+ 50 ♔g2 ♕h1+ 51 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 52 ♔f4 ♕h4+ 53 ♔e3 and wins.

43...♕e3 44 ♘e4+ ♔h5 45 ♕h7+ ♗h6 46 ♕d7 ♗f4 (or 46...♗g5 47 ♕g4+ ♔h6 48 h4 ♗f4 49 ♖g1) **47 ♘f6+ ♔g5 48 ♘d5 1-0**

A quite incredible game, which decided the outcome of the match. Taken out of the context of the encounter as a whole, it creates an incomprehensible and sad impression. It appears that White was simply incredibly lucky. But if one remembers Spassky's match strategy, everything falls into place. It is another matter than this strategy demanded an enormous self-belief and reserves of energy. Spassky was already full of the psychological confidence, so necessary to a challenger, that in any case he would become world champion: 'If I don't happen to win this game, I will win the next one!' Can one mentally withstand such pressure?!

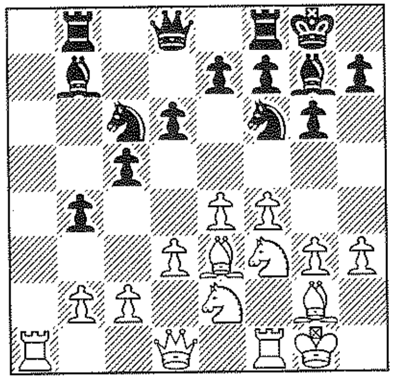
In the 6th game the shocked Geller wanted to improve Black's play, but Spassky got his improvement in first and inflicted an utterly crushing defeat.

Game 73

B.Spassky-E.Geller

Candidates Match,
Sukhumi 1968, 6th game
Sicilian Defence B25

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 d6 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 g6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 f4 ♘f6 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 0-0 ♖b8 9 h3! b5 10 a3 a5 11 ♗e3 b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 ♘e2 ♗b7 (13...♘d7!?)



14 b3!

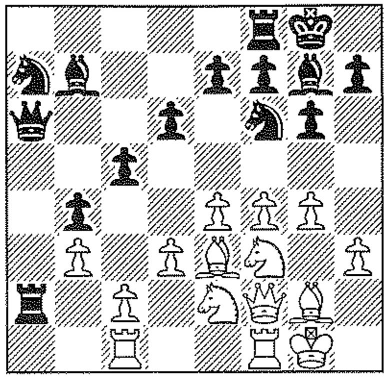
'An exclamation mark – for anticipation! Guessing that Black would stick to the conventional move order, Spassky and Bondarevsky worked out an exceptionally accurate arrangement of the forces. Possibly I should have changed plan: 14...♘d7!? 15 ♖c1 e6! 16 g4 d5 with a good game.' (Geller)

14...♖a8 15 ♖c1 (by not wasting time on ♖b1, White gains a tempo) **15...♖a2 16 g4 ♕a8?!**

The queen should have been kept closer – 16...♕c7 or 16...♕a5 17 ♕e1 ♕b5 18 ♕f2 ♖fa8 with the idea of ...♘d7 and ...♖a1.

17 ♕e1 ♕a6?! (in Geller's opinion, 'after 17...d5 18 e5 ♘d7 19 ♕h4 e6 it was still possible to construct a defence') **18 ♕f2 ♘a7?!**

18...♘d7 was more circumspect.



19 f5!

'The beginning of the end. White's attack develops so rapidly that Black does not even have time to pick up the now superfluous c2-pawn.' (Geller) As we see, White has achieved far more from the opening than in the 4th game (to say nothing of the 2nd).

19...♘b5 20 fxg6 hxg6?

This loses by force. According to Geller, '20...fxg6 would not have changed anything,' but in my opinion this would have made things much harder for White:

1) 21 ♕h4 ♘c7! (21...♘a3? 22 ♘g5! and ♖xf6) 22 ♘g5 (22 ♘f4?! e5!; 22 e5 dxe5! 23 ♗xc5 ♘e6 24 ♗xe7 ♖f7) 22...h6! 23 ♘f4 (but not 23 ♘f3? ♖xc2! 24 ♖xc2 ♕xd3) 23...hxg5 24 ♕xg5 ♘h7 25 ♕xg6 ♖f6 26 ♕h5 with sharp play;

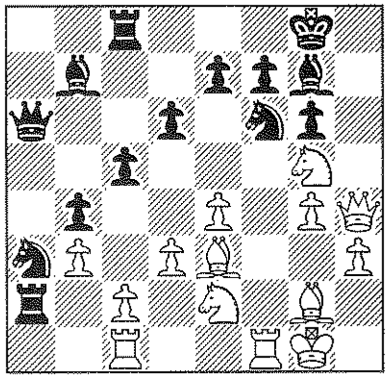
2) 21 ♘f4 ♗c8 22 e5!? dxe5 23 ♘xe5 ♘e4! 24 ♗xe4 ♗xe5 25 ♕h4 ♗xf4 (25...♗f6? 26 ♗d5+ e6 27 ♘xe6! ♗xe6 28 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 29 ♕xf6 ♗xd5 30 ♕d8+ ♔g7 31 ♕e7+! ♗f7 32 ♕e5+ is bad) 26 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 27 ♗xf4 ♕f6 28 ♗d5+ (28 ♗g5 ♕d4+ 29 ♔h1 ♘c3 30 ♗f3 ♘e2! is unclear) 28...♔f8 29 ♕f2!? (if 29 ♗h6+ ♔e8 30 ♕xf6 exf6 31 ♗c6+ ♗d7 32 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 33 ♗e3, then 33...c4! 34 dxc4 ♗c6 35 ♗c5 ♗e4 36 c3 bxc3 37 ♖xc3 ♖c2 38 ♖e3 f5 with sufficient compensation) 29...♘d4 30 ♕e3 ♖xc2 31 ♖xc2 ♘xc2 32 ♗h6+ ♔e8 33 ♕xc5 ♕d4+ 34 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 35 ♔f2 ♗e6 36 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 37 ♗e3 with the better endgame.

21 ♘g5 ♘a3

This counterplay against the c2-pawn is clearly too late. In contrast to the previous game, White has not burned his boats behind him – he has not given up much material.

22 ♕h4 ♖c8

If 22...♖e8 White would have won by 23 e5! dxe5 24 ♖xf6! exf6 25 ♕h7+ ♔f8 26 ♗xc5+ ♖e7 27 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 28 ♕xg7 fxg5 29 ♕xe5+, whereas now there follows an immediate exchange sacrifice.



23 ♖xf6! exf6 24 ♕h7+ ♔f8

Again, as in the 4th game, the white queen breaks through at h7 – the character of the play is completely identical: pursuit of the king! Moreover, on this occasion a spectacular blow proves decisive:

25 ♘xf7! ♖xc2?

Ah, this ill-fated pawn! Nevertheless it was more tenacious to play 25...♔xf7 26 ♗h6 ♖g8 27 ♘f4 ♖xc2 28 ♖f1! g5 29 ♕g6+ ♔e7 30 ♗xg7 gxf4 31 ♗xf6+ ♔d7 32 ♕xg8 ♕xd3 33 ♕f7+ ♔c6 34 ♕d5+ ♕xd5 35 exd5+ ♔d7 36 ♗e4 etc.

26 ♗h6! ♖xc1+ (or 26...♕xd3 27 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 28 ♖xc2 ♘xc2 29 ♘f4) **27 ♘xc1 ♔xf7** (if 27...♗xh6 28 ♘xh6 ♔e8 White wins by 29 ♘g8 ♔f8 30 ♘e7) **28 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 29 g5** (29 e5 ♗xg2 30 e6 was also good) **29...f5 30 ♕xg6+ ♔d7** (or 30...♔d8 31 ♕f7 ♕c6 32 g6 ♕d7 33 ♕h7! ♔c7 34 g7) **31 ♕f7+ ♔c6 32 exf5+ 1-0**

The best game of the match.

The final score was 5½-2½ – the same as three years earlier. It might be thought that Geller played below his usual strength. But this is incorrect: he played as well as Spassky allowed him! The winner demonstrated a clear superiority in the psychology of match play.

'Spassky's staggering calmness and composure enable him to find the best practical measures at the most difficult moments of a game,' wrote Geller after the match. 'The amazing imperturbability and confidence, with which he sometimes makes moves that are not even the best, undoubtedly places his opponents in a false position. Several times I wasted precious time, trying to discern that which in reality was not there! Spassky made several serious mistakes, but his excellent tactical resourcefulness always helped him to complicate the play.'

Three months later, in the summer of 1968, came the semi-final match with Bent Larsen, whose star was then very much in the ascendancy (an account of the outstanding Danish grandmaster can be read in Volume 4). And again a crushing defeat awaited Spassky's opponent! It all began with the 'quiet', but psychologically very important first game. Some interesting thoughts on this game, and on the match as a whole, were expressed by Euwe:

'Spassky is less aware of his strength than the majority of the great players, and in this respect he is the antipode of Larsen. The Danish grandmaster firmly believes in himself, he aims for the initiative and he always plays for a win. His play somewhat resembles that of Bogoljubow, who said: "When I am White, I win because I am White, when I am Black – because I am Bogoljubow." Larsen is not afraid of any positional complications and he goes in for rash tricks in order to achieve his goals. "The king can defend itself," thinks Larsen, and he does not undertake any special precautionary measures to safeguard his own king. The duel of the antipodes, Larsen and Spassky, took an exceptionally tense and fighting course. There was a clash, on the one hand, of Larsen's eagerness to seize the initiative at any cost, and on the other – of Spassky's deliberately restrained strategy, which, however, in no way restricted his enormous practical strength.

'In the first game Spassky chose the quiet Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence, which usually leads to a quick draw. In this way he allowed Larsen an opportunity to display his ambitions. The latter indeed did not wish to be content with a tedious role and tried to seize the initiative in an almost lifeless position. But here, with the help of an accurately calculated combination, the far-sighted Spassky created a sudden attack on the king. A splendid game, probably the best in the match!'

Game 74

B.Spassky-B.Larsen

Candidates Match, Malmö 1968, 1st game

Slav Defence D14

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 c4 c6 (Larsen had hardly ever played this before!) **4 cxd5 cxd5 5 ♗f4 ♘c6 6 ♘c3 ♗f5 7 e3 e6 8 ♗b5**

The variation 8 ♕b3 ♗b4! 9 ♗b5 (Botvinnik-Trifunovic, Moscow 1947), which has a drawish reputation, acquired some new theory towards the end of the century, but its evaluation remained unchanged.

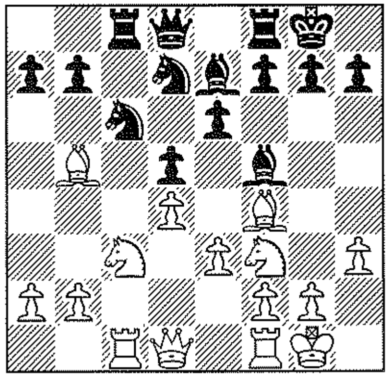
8...♘d7! (8...♗b4?! 9 ♘e5! – *Volume 2, Game No.75*) **9 0-0**

The modern line is 9 ♕a4 ♖c8 (9...♕b6 10 ♘h4!) 10 0-0 a6 11 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 12 ♖fc1 ♗e7 13 ♘d1!? (against Sveshnikov, 44th USSR Championship, Moscow 1976, Petrosian played 13 ♘e2 with the idea of 13...♗d3?! 14 ♖xc6 ♗b5 15 ♕xb5!! axb5 16 ♖c7, but 13...♕b6! 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 is more solid) 13...b5 14 ♕b3 with some chances of an advantage.

9...♗e7 10 ♖c1

10 ♕b3!? is more energetic, for example: 10...g5 11 ♗g3 h5 12 h3 g4 13 hxg4 hxg4 14 ♘d2 (Milov-Sadler, Isle of Man 1994) 14...a6!?, or 10...0-0 11 ♖fc1 ♖c8 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♕b7 with a sharp struggle (Milov-Hübner, Switzerland 1998).

10...0-0 11 h3?! (11 ♕b3!) **11...♖c8**



12 ♗d3?!

It was better to play 12 ♘a4 ♕a5 13 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 14 ♖xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e5 ♘xe5 16 ♗xe5 f6 17 ♗g3 with equality. Why then did Spassky present his opponent with so many tempi? It is probable that, on encountering an opening surprise, he decided to avoid complications and stick to waiting strategy – in short, to allow Larsen 'to play a bit'. As Botvinnik liked to say: 'Let the fellow make a move!'

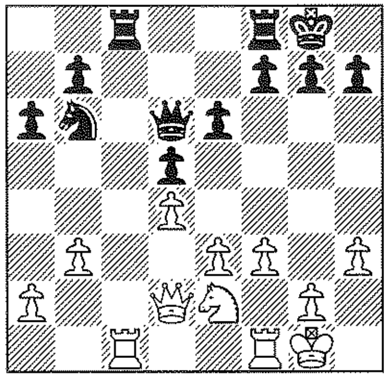
12...♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♘b6 14 ♕e2 a6

Black already has a very comfortable game: his knight will invade at c4, and evicting it by b2-b3 will weaken the queenside. White often loses such positions, and he has to play precisely and accurately to avoid this.

15 ♘e1! ♘c4 16 ♘d3 ♘b4?!

The very first inaccuracy immediately leads to the loss of the initiative. After 16...♕a5! Black's position would have been the slightly more pleasant.

17 b3 ♘xd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘b6 19 f3 ♗d6 20 ♘e2 ♕e7 21 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♕d2!



Preparing ♘f4-d3. 'In equal positions Spassky usually plays very subtly.' (Gligoric)

For the moment there is dead calm on the board, but this is clearly not to the ambitious Dane's taste! He does not want to reconcile himself to a draw and begins looking for active moves – 'with his customary optimism he wants to attack even there, where the position does not allow this.' (Spassky)

22...♕a3?!

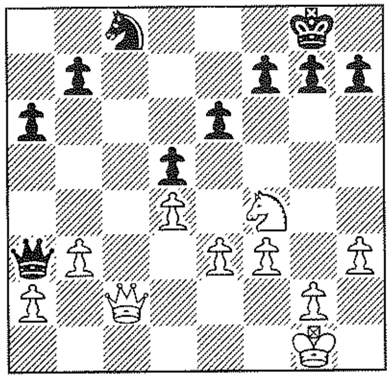
This move does not yet spoil anything, but it was simpler to play 22...♖xc1 23 ♖xc1 ♖c8 24 ♕a5 h5 with equality.

23 ♘f4 ♖xc1?!

Despite the loss of two tempi, 'Black should have admitted his mistake and returned – 23...♕d6.' (Spassky)

And again I remember Botvinnik, who reprimanded me for my flippant play: 'If you "bungle" like this, you'll be transformed into a Taimanov or a Larsen!' This did not sound too bad for a young candidate master in the mid-1970s, but today, when I look at this game, I feel ill at ease at such a prospect.

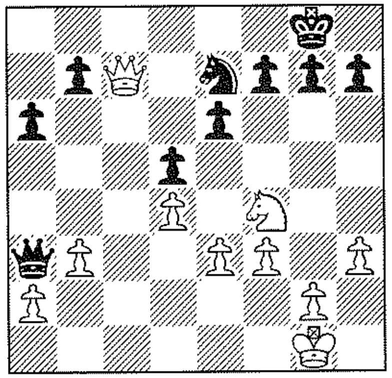
24 ♖xc1 ♖c8 25 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 26 ♕c2!



The white queen unexpectedly breaks into the enemy position, exploiting the lack of harmony among Black's pieces: his queen is isolated, his knight has no strong-points, and in addition his king has no escape square.

26...♘e7 27 ♕c7

The character of the play has changed sharply: White has begun to create concrete threats, and Larsen has to defend.



27...g6?

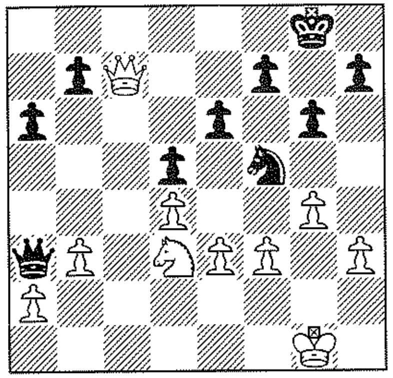
An inexplicable move. Apparently the indefatigable Larsen wanted to leap with his knight to f5 and 27...♘g6! seemed too simplistic to him. However, after 28 ♘xg6 (28 ♕c8+ ♘f8 29 ♘d3? does not work in view of 29...♕xa2 30 ♘c5 ♕d2!) 28...hxg6 29 ♕c8+ ♔h7 30 ♕xb7 f6 Black would easily have gained a draw due to the weakness of the white pawns: 31 ♔h2 ♕xa2 32 ♕b6 a5.

28 ♘d3

It was possibly stronger (but also more risky!) to play 28 ♕xb7!? ♕c1+ 29 ♔f2 ♘f5 30 ♕b8+ ♔g7 31 ♕e5+ ♔g8 32 ♘e2 with an extra pawn. But Spassky subtly senses the change in the situation and calmly strengthens his position, probably hoping that Larsen's 27th move will not be his last mistake.

28...♘f5 29 g4!

The only winning try. The immediate 29 ♘e5 would have been parried by the simple 29...♕e7.



29...♘h6?

White did not have to wait long for the next mistake: realising that he had to think not about activity, but about how to save the game, Larsen became rattled! In my opinion, it would be better to resign immediately than to retreat the knight to 'nowhere'. As Gligoric expressed it, 'now the black king suffocates'.

Meanwhile, Black's position was still defensible, and he only had to find the regrouping 29...♘d6 30 ♘e5 h6! The audacious black queen cannot be underestimated: it defends the knight and, crucially, ties down the white queen by the need to control the c1-square, from which saving checks can begin. In addition, with the pawn on h6 White cannot plan the flight of his king to f4. The other attacking scheme does not work – 31 ♘d7 ♘b5!, while after the continuation 31 ♕c5! ♕xc5 32 dxc5 the endgame is closer to a draw than to a win for White.

30 ♘e5! (White suddenly creates a mating attack, in which his king takes an active part)

30...♕b4

It was no better to play 30...♕xa2 31 ♘d7 ♕a3 32 ♔g2! ♕b4 33 ♔g3 b5 34 ♕b8+ ♔g7 35 ♕e5+ ♔g8 36 ♔f4! etc.

31 ♘d7! ♕e1+ 32 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 33 ♔g3 ♘f5+ (if 33...♕e1+ 34 ♔f4! g5+ 35 ♔xg5 ♕xe3+ 36 f4 ♔g7, then 37 ♕d8! is decisive) **34 gxf5 ♕e1+ 35 ♔f4! ♕h4+ 36 ♔e5 ♕g3+ 37 f4 ♕xe3+ 38 ♔f6** (such a victorious march by the king into the opponent's position always creates a great impression) **38...♕xd4+ 39 ♘e5 1-0**

This purely psychological defeat so affected Larsen that the subsequent play was one-sided. He also lost the next two games and, in the end, the match: 2½-5½. Spassky again displayed a brilliant understanding of his opponent's psychology.

The Storming of Olympus

Just two months later Spassky met Korchnoi (who had defeated Tal in the semi-final) in the Candidates final. Viktor Lvovich solved the problem of the Closed Variation of the Sicilian, but this did not help him, since his opponent outplayed him in a complicated and protracted struggle, also with Black. And with White, when his play with 1 e4 did not work out, Spassky simply switched to 1 d4, and this proved unpleasant for Korchnoi. In the 7th game, as though hypnotised, he chose the King's Indian Defence and was quickly crushed in the Sämisch Variation.

Recently Korchnoi and I were discussing those days, and he admitted that at that time it was been very difficult to combat Spassky: 'Boris skilfully maintained the tension and made strong, unexpected moves at decisive moments. He complicated the play just before time-trouble, when I no longer had any time left...' We also mentioned Bondarevsky: after all, it was he who made the talented young grandmaster into a genuinely strong-willed match fighter. The outcome of that match with Korchnoi was 6½-3½ in Spassky's favour. Next in line was an encounter with Petrosian.

Every match for the world championship has its mystery; a sentiment that Spassky in particular likes to repeat. In such duels there are indeed a mass of hidden nuances that influence the decisions of the two players. At times these are inexplicable even to those who have at some time fought for the world crown themselves. And for others it is extremely difficult to imagine the degree of nervous tension and the diverse motifs by which the participants in the battle are governed.

I can picture the psychological problems that Spassky and Petrosian encountered in 1969: after their first match they knew everything, or nearly everything, about each other. Spassky faced a very difficult situation. He was now stronger than Petrosian, having made a step forward in his chess evolution. However, chess strength in general and chess strength in a specific match are by no means one and the same thing. After all, Spassky had also been very strong in 1966, as indicated by his brilliant victory in the super-tournament in Santa Monica (ahead of Fischer, Larsen, Portisch, Petrosian etc.) just two months after the lost match. But however the various tournaments turned out for Petrosian, he was an extremely dangerous match opponent. It was here that his qualities acquired particular value: his unique sense of danger, and his ability to avoid a direct confrontation and to deploy his pieces such that they restricted the opponent's possibilities.

It is interesting to observe how Spassky breached this wall. The match was rather uneven, but in the end the challenger won the latent psychological struggle, in which he had been unsuccessful in 1966. That previous match had also been a difficult one, but Petrosian had dominated psychologically: it seems to me that in the depths of his heart Spassky had not really believed that he would win, and at some point he had lost the necessary confidence in himself. In a recent interview he admitted: 'I was worn out by the qualifying competitions and, in addition, I was poor. And when a poor man becomes a king (and I hold monarchist views), this does not turn out well! In the first match I was helped by Smyslov: he fed me all the time at his place, and by the end of the match I had actually put on six kilograms! But when I played the second match I already had money, so I was able to compensate my trainers: after all, I had won the first prize of $5,000 at the tournament in Santa Monica.' I should explain that in the late 1960s, especially in the USSR, this was a considerable sum of money!

Of course, these were completely different matches (although there were some amazing similarities: for example, the 20th game of the first match with the 10th of the second match – two nightmarish defeats for the challenger in the Nimzo-Indian Defence!). And, of course, in 1969 Spassky had learned from the lessons of the earlier match. But Petrosian too arrived fully armed for the second encounter. Being very aware of his opponent's weaknesses, he by no means considered himself to be doomed. And he even took a mysterious decision: not to avoid complicated, double-edged set-ups, and to take more risks than usual. For the sake of this he sacrificed his solidity! His 'Black' openings were markedly more aggressive than those of three years earlier, whereas his 'White' openings were, as usual, aimed at gradual suffocation.

In those times there was still great scope for creativity, and there was not such rigorous and long-range opening preparation as, for example, in my matches with Karpov or even in the matches between Karpov and Korchnoi. Even so, the second Petrosian-Spassky match was the first to feature prolonged, critical opening duels, based on the deep development of entire systems. The Tarrasch Defence became a testing ground. Its employment by Spassky was one of the main revelations of the match (although he had also played it previously, on occasion). This was an audacious challenge to the positional principles of Petrosian, who liked playing by points, against some permanent weakness – for example, against an isolated d5-pawn.

But Spassky had no fear of the 'isolani'. He deployed his pieces harmoniously and created tactical threats very resourcefully. If necessary he also calmly and patiently defended slightly inferior positions (an area in which he had made obvious progress compared with 1966). The theory of the Tarrasch Defence was virgin territory in those days, and Spassky (along with his trainer, Bondarevsky) subtly sensed that his opponent would play too cautiously, avoiding committing continuations and thereby allowing Black to solve his opening problems successfully. Also present was a psychological implication, typical of Spassky: hypnotised by the 'dubious' defence and the eternal weakness at d5, White might overstep the mark. And, as we shall see, this judgment was fully justified.

The match began badly for Spassky. In the 1st game it was apparently anxiety that told: after reaching an excellent position from the opening (the Paulsen Variation in the Sicilian Defence), he delayed matters and found himself in a difficult endgame; during the resumption he found a study-like draw, but then blundered and lost at the very last moment. In the 2nd game, employing the Tarrasch Defence, he quickly seized the initiative, forcing White to secure a draw. In the opinion of grandmaster Boleslavsky, Petrosian's second, 'this game had a serious influence on the further course of the match: Spassky realised that Petrosian could be let down by his positional instinct and that in his favourite positions he was beginning to feel not altogether confident.' In the third game there was a quiet draw – Spassky did not achieve anything as White, employing the Maróczy set-up against the Accelerated Dragon.

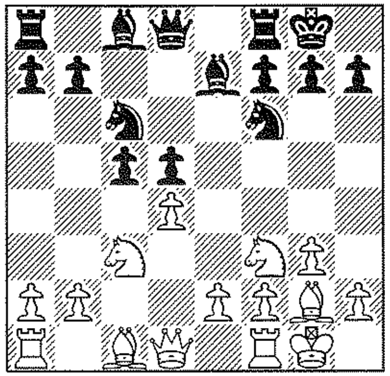
The 4th and 5th games proved to be the turning point. When I came to annotate them, I looked through the splendid book on the match by Boleslavsky and Bondarevsky, which I received as a present back in my childhood.

Game 75
T.Petrosian-B.Spassky
World Championship Match,
Moscow 1969, 4th game
Queen's Gambit D34

1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5

An unexpected repetition of the opening in the 2nd game. Petrosian, who did not rate the Tarrasch Defence very highly, had thought that it was simply a one-off.

5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 g3 ♘f6 7 ♗g2 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0



9 ♗g5

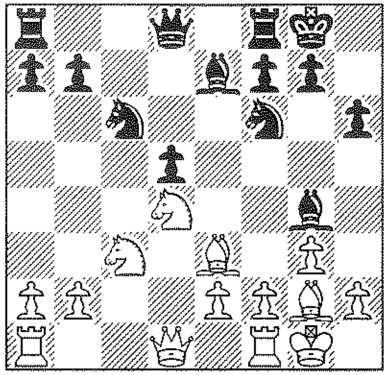
The best plan, although the 9th world champion had previously played both 9 ♗f4 and 9 ♗e3.

9...cxd4

After 9...♗e6 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♗xf6! (according to Bondarevsky, 'nipping in the bud the opponent's striving for active piece play'; 11 ♘a4 – *Volume 2, Game No.45*) 11...♕xf6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 13 ♘c7 ♖ad8 14 ♕c1 ♕xc1 15 ♖axc1 ♗b6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 (Rubinstein-Schlechter, Vienna 1908), or 15...b6 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 (Petrosian-Spassky, 16th matchgame, Moscow 1969) Black has a depressing endgame. And although he escaped the worst in both these games, later practice confirmed the correctness of this evaluation.

10 ♘xd4 h6 11 ♗e3 ♗g4

'Petrosian had a sceptical regard for this move, and he was surprised that Spassky employed it a second time.' (Boleslavsky)



12 ♘b3

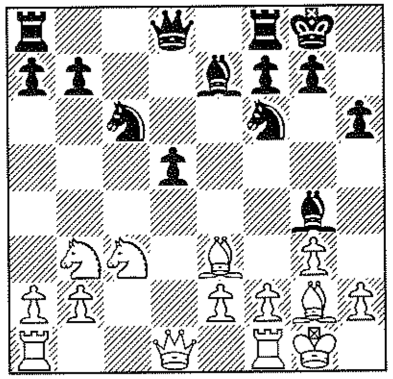
As soon transpires, White had not yet prepared anything serious in this variation. 12 h3 ♗e6 13 ♖c1 (13 ♘xc6?! bxc6 14 ♘a4 ♕c8! 15 ♔h2 c5) 13...♕d7 14 ♔h2 ♘e5 also promises him little (Korchnoi-Spassky, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957). And only in the 12th game did he hit on an advantage after 12 ♕a4! ♘a5 13 ♖ad1 (as, incidentally, I beat Palatnik in 1981), forcing Black to turn in the 18th game to the more flexible 11...♖e8!, which has been the main move ever since.

Since I also used to play the Tarrasch Defence, I can add that the mechanical siege of the d5-pawn does not bring White any tangible gains. What is required is energetic play and the accurate deployment of his forces, enabling him both to blockade the d-pawn, and to suppress Black's piece activity. I successfully employed this risky defence in Candidates matches (1983-84), where after 11...♖e8 Belyavsky tried 12 ♕a4 and 12 ♕c2, and Korchnoi and Smyslov – 12 a3, but only in the match for the world crown was a comparatively unpleasant plan found: 12 ♕b3 ♘a5 13 ♕c2 ♗g4 14 ♘f5 ♖c8 (it is also possible to play 14...♗b4 15 ♗d4 ♗xc3 16 ♗xc3

♖xe2 17 ♕d1 – 17 ♕d3!? – 17...d4 18 ♘xd4 ♖xf2 19 ♕a4 ♖xg2+ 20 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ 21 ♔g1 ♘c4 22 ♕b5 a6 23 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 and Black can hold the endgame, Kasparov-Illescas, Linares 1990) 15 ♗d4 ♗c5 16 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♘e3! ♗e6 18 ♖ad1 ♕c8 19 ♕a4 with a slight but enduring advantage (Karpov-Kasparov, 9th matchgame, Moscow 1984/85). True, experience has shown that here too Black can put up a successful fight: 18...♕d7!? 19 ♕d3 (19 b4 ♖c7 20 bxa5 d4 21 ♖d3 ♗f5!) 19...♘c4 20 ♘xc4 (20 ♕d4 ♘xe3!) 20...dxc4 with equality (Lastin-Bezgodov, Moscow 1999).

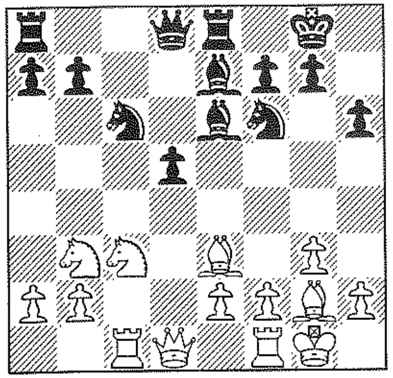
In the 1990s the main continuation became 12 ♖c1 ♗f8, for example: 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♘a4 ♗d7 15 ♗c5 ♗xc5 16 ♘xc5 ♗g4 17 ♖e1 ♕a5 18 h3 ♗f5 19 ♕d4! ♖ab8 20 a3 (Kasparov-Illescas, Linares 1994), or 13 ♘a4!? ♗d7 14 ♘c5 (Kramnik-Illescas, Linares 1994) – in both cases with some advantage to White.

The Tarrasch Defence continues to be played to this day, albeit more rarely. The theory of this opening has made great strides and it no longer has its former freshness and novelty: ways have been found for White to neutralise the opponent's active counterplay...



12...♗e6 13 ♖c1 (if 13 ♘c5, then 13...d4! 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♗xc6 dxe3 is possible) **13...♖e8!**

'The routine 13...♖c8 was inferior, since after 14 ♘b5 Black would have had to move one of his queenside pawns, which for the moment does not come into his plans.' (Boleslavsky)



14 ♖e1

This is a novelty. The 2nd game went 14 ♘b5 (a pointless manoeuvre, made on general grounds) 14...♕d7 15 ♘5d4 ♗h3 16 ♘xc6 bxc6 17 ♕d3 ♗xg2 18 ♔xg2 a5! with equality. The alternative is 14 ♘c5!? ♗xc5 15 ♗xc5 with a small plus after both 15...♕a5 16 ♗d4 ♘xd4 (or 16...♘e4 17 a3 ♖ad8 18 e3) 17 ♕xd4 ♖ac8 18 e3 ♖c4 19 ♕d3 ♖ec8 20 ♖cd1 ♖8c5 21 a3, and 15...♘e4 16 ♘xe4 dxe4 17 ♕a4 ♕d5 18 ♗xe4 ♕xa2 19 ♕xa2 ♗xa2 20 f3.

14...♕d7 15 ♗c5

Played after 17 minutes' thought and again on general grounds – for the sake of the 'positionally advantageous exchange of dark-squared bishops'. The commentators attach an exclamation mark to this move. However, 15 ♘c5!? again comes into consideration here. For example, 15...♗xc5 16 ♗xc5 ♖ad8 (it is no better to play 16...b6 17 ♗d4!, or 16...d4 17 ♘b5 ♗xa2 18 ♘xd4 ♗d5 19 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 20 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♗xc6 bxc6 22 ♗e3 ♖e6 23 ♖a1) 17 ♘b5 ♘e4 18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♘d6 b6 20 ♗a3 (but not 20 ♘xe8? ♕xe8 21 ♗d6 ♘a5 22 ♖c7 ♘c4) is favourable for White.

15...♖ac8

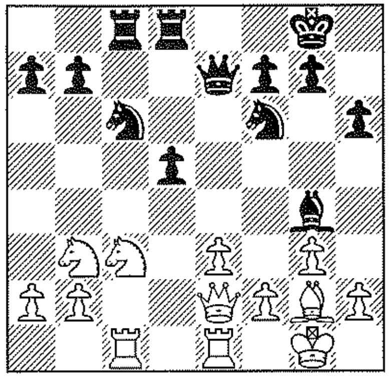
15...♖ad8 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 is also acceptable. Here the harmonious development of Black's pieces fully compensates for the weakness of his isolated d5-pawn: 17 e3 ♗g4 (17...♕b4?! 18 a3 ♕b6 19 ♘a4 ♕b5 20 ♘d4 ♘xd4 21 ♕xd4 is inferior) 18 f3 ♗f5 19 ♘b5 ♖c8 20 ♘5d4 ♘xd4 21 ♘xd4 ♗g6 etc.

16 ♗xe7 (16 ♘b5 ♗h3 17 ♗h1 a6 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘5d4 ♘e4 with equality, Bondarevsky) **16...♕xe7!** (with the intention of ...♖ed8 and ...d5-d4) **17 e3**

This took White 14 minutes. 17 ♘xd5?! (if 17 ♘b5 or 17 ♘d4, then 17...♕b4) 17...♘xd5 18 ♗xd5 was unfavourable on account of 18...♖cd8 19 e4 ♘b4 and the capture on d5.

17...♖ed8 18 ♕e2 (vacating the d1-square for the rook) **18...♗g4!**

An unpleasant 'left hook'. The hasty 18...d4? would have led to a difficult endgame after 19 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 20 exd4 ♖xd4 21 ♘b5 ♖xc1 22 ♘xd4! ♖xe1+ 23 ♕xe1.

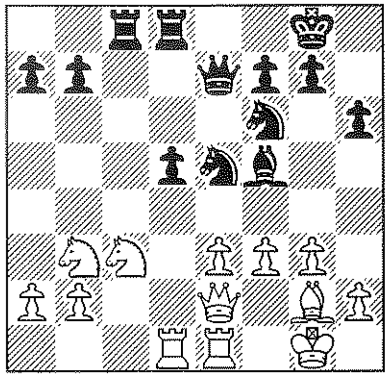


19 f3

'Driving back the audacious bishop and securely defending the e4- and g4-squares. The e3-pawn is easily defended and it is not hard to activate the g2-bishop. Even so, 19 f3 imparts to the game that sharpness which Petrosian usually endeavoured to avoid. A more flexible alternative was 19 ♕f1!? (with the threat of 20 h3 ♗h5 21 ♘e2 and ♘f4). After 19...♘e5 20 ♘d4 ♕b4 21 ♕b5 White obtains the better endgame, while if 19...♘e4 he has the one correct reply 20 ♘e2!' (Boleslavsky)

A very interesting recommendation. I should just like to amend the last variation: 20...♘b4 21 f3! ♘d2 22 ♘xd2 ♕xe3+ 23 ♕f2 ♕xf2+! (but not 23...♕xd2? 24 ♖cd1 ♕c2 25 fxg4 ♘d3 26 ♖xd3 ♕xd3 27 ♘f4) 24 ♔xf2 ♘d3+ 25 ♔f1 ♘xc1 26 ♖xc1! ♖xc1+ 27 ♘xc1 ♗f5 28 ♘cb3! (28 ♘db3? ♖c8 29 ♘e2 ♗d3 30 ♘d4 ♖c1+ 31 ♔f2 ♗xe2 32 ♔xe2 ♖b1 is incorrect) 28...d4 (now 28...♖c8?! misses the mark: 29 ♘d4 ♗d7 30 f4 ♖c1+ 31 ♔e2) 29 f4 b6 30 ♔f2 with somewhat the better ending. If instead Black plays 20...♘a5, then after 21 ♘ed4! ♘xb3 22 ♘xb3 he is also left with a fixed weakness at d5.

19...♗f5 20 ♖cd1 ♘e5



Although nominally White still retains a slight initiative, now he too has weaknesses and a change in the play gradually begins to occur. This is no longer that typically Petrosian-like play, 'coiling round' the opponent's weaknesses, where for a long time one can move here and there and see what happens. The position becomes increasingly double-edged and demands concrete action.

Thus Spassky had won the psychological duel, by taking the play onto territory where the opponent felt less confident. After all, Petrosian's strength was always in his anticipation of danger, and if he thought that it was time to make a draw, he would do so. But here he played for a win with 19 f3 and... began to lose his objectivity! It seems to me that he felt the need to demonstrate an advantage for White in the Tarrasch Defence, preventing him from modifying his play, which he would probably have done in another opening. It was this that Spassky was trying to achieve. His idea was that the opponent would not realise the true danger of his position until it was too late, seeking an ephemeral advantage and then having to engage in a painstaking defence and find the only moves.

21 ♘d4

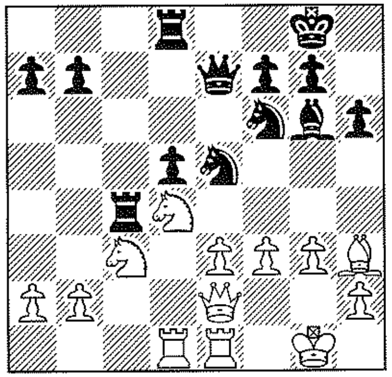
Occupying the d4-square. It was not at all in Petrosian's style to play 21 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 23 e4 ♘d3!? (this is better than the struggle for a draw after 23...♗xe4 24 ♕xe4 ♘c6 25 ♕xe7 ♘dxe7 26 f4 ♔f8) 24 ♕xd3 ♘b4 25 ♕b5 ♗e6 with excellent play for the pawn.

21...♗g6!?

Another provocative move, allowing White to activate his bishop and inviting him to seek an advantage. 21...♗e6 was much more modest, whereas 21...♗d7?! was bad on account of 22 f4 ♗g4 23 fxe5! ♗xe2 24 exf6 ♕xe3+ 25 ♔h1 ♕g5 26 ♘dxe2 ♕xf6 27 ♘xd5, when the three minor pieces are clearly stronger than the queen.

22 ♗h3 ♖c4!

Of course, Spassky sharpens the play as much as possible! After the quiet 22...♖b8 it is doubtful whether White has anything significant, but Black too would have been deprived of active play.



'Black is in danger of ending up in a difficult position: the hanging position of his rook may provide the theme for various combinations.' (Boleslavsky) However, White also has to take into account a mass of tactical possibilities for the opponent. Petrosian thought for 12 minutes.

23 g4!?

One would like to play 23 f4 immediately (in order to block in the bishop with f4-f5), but then Black has 23...♗h5 24 ♕f1, and now not 24...♖xd4? 25 exd4 ♘f3+ 26 ♕xf3! ♕xe1+ 27 ♖xe1 ♗xf3 28 ♖e7 ♖b8 (28...b5 29 ♖xa7 b4 30 ♘b5! ♖e8 31 ♘d6! ♖e2 32 ♖a8+ ♔h7 33 ♘xf7 is even worse) 29 ♘b5 ♔f8 30 ♖c7 ♘e8 31 ♖c3 with advantage to White, but 24...♘c6! 25 g4 ♘xg4 (this forces a draw) 26 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♕xc4 ♕h4! 28 ♗xg4 (28 ♕f1? ♘xe3!) 28...♕xg4+ 29 ♔h1 ♖xd4 30 ♖xd4 ♕f3+ 31 ♔g1 ♕g4+ with perpetual.

After 23 ♕f1 Bondarevsky recommended 23...♕b4. Now if play continues with the plausible 24 ♖d2 ♗h5! 25 a3 ♕a5 26 g4 ♗g6 27 ♖ed1 ♖e8 28 ♕f2 I found a typical exchange sacrifice: 28...♖xc3! 29 bxc3 ♘c4 30 ♖e2 ♕xc3 with more than sufficient compensation. Perhaps 23 a3!? and only then ♕f1 would be more cautious, but here too White constantly has to reckon with the exchange sacrifice.

Petrosian's move is pretentious, and perhaps also the strongest: now 24 f4 and 25 ♘xd5! is seriously threatened. Leading '+1', the world champion thought that he could allow himself to play in a more risky, creative manner, by weakening his kingside. I think that he did not even consider the possibility of losing.

23...♖b4!?

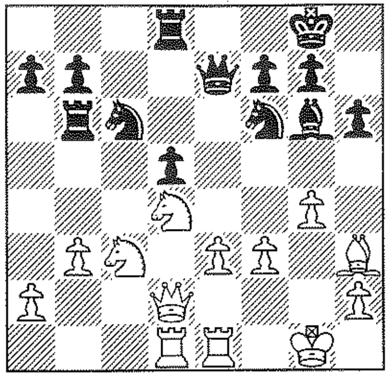
Yet another provocation! Objectively, it was safer to play 23...♕d7! (but not 23...♕c5? 24 f4 ♘c6 25 ♘b3 ♕b4 26 ♗g2! ♘e7 27 f5 ♗h7 28 ♘d4) 24 ♕g2 ♕c7 with a very complicated, roughly equal game. But Spassky makes a move that is purely psychological, as though to unnerve his opponent. Oh, this hooligan-like rook! (One involuntarily recalls an old game between Tarrasch and Lasker – *Volume 1, Game No.54*). Petrosian thought for a further 10 minutes, trying in vain to find an answer to the question: 'How to punish Black for such provocative play?'

24 b3

'The tempting move 24 f4 does not bring any benefit in view of 24...♘c4! 25 b3 ♘d6 26 f5 ♗h7 27 ♗g2 ♕e5.' (Bondarevsky) For example: 28 ♘a4 ♘de4 29 ♖d3 h5! 30 a3 ♖xa4 31 bxa4 hxg4 and Black is perfectly alright.

24...♘c6 25 ♕d2 ♖b6

No one has mentioned the return move 25...♘e5!, and if 26 ♔h1, then 26...♖b6 27 ♗f1 ♘h7 with sufficient counterplay.



26 ♘ce2?!

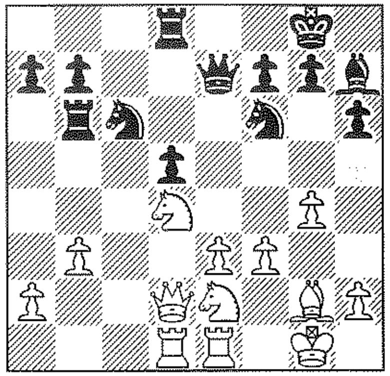
White begins to lose the thread and makes a tactical oversight. 'Tired out by the preceding struggle, Petrosian overlooks that after the active 26 ♘a4! Black cannot reply 26...♘xd4? 27 exd4 ♖e6, since after 28 g5! he loses the exchange. There would only remain 26...♖a6, but then 27 ♗f1 ♘xd4 28 exd4 (28 ♕xd4?! ♖e6 29 ♕xa7 h5! is weaker; *even better is 28...♖c6! 29 ♕xa7 h5! 30 g5 ♘e8 31 f4 f6 32 ♗g2 ♗e4 or 31 h4 f6 32 f4 ♗e4 – G.K.*) 28...♖e6 29 ♘c5 ♖xe1 30 ♖xe1 ♕c7 31 ♖e5 with a positional squeeze.' (Boleslavsky) And although after 31...b6 32 ♘d3 'Black has a perfectly sound position without weaknesses,' (Bondarevsky) it is nevertheless worse for him than in the game, and in any event White would not have been risking anything here.

26...♗h7

'A cunning move!' (Boleslavsky) By moving the bishop out of range of the knight at f4, Black invites the opponent to declare his intentions. Petrosian spent a further eight minutes here...

27 ♗g2?!

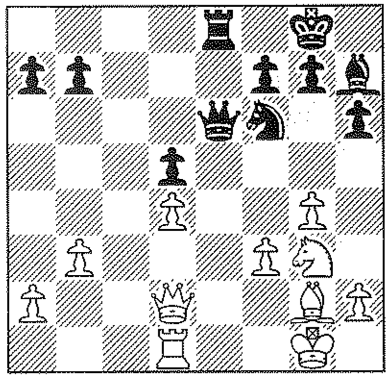
'A serious turning-point in the course of the struggle has been reached. White's initiative on the kingside has completely evaporated, and only weaknesses and his bad bishop remain. This probably exerted a certain psychological pressure on Petrosian's subsequent play, although in general the chances of the two sides are equal.' (Bondarevsky) Of course, a more logical continuation was 27 ♘f4 (27 ♗f1!?) 27...♕a3!? (it can hardly be advantageous to play 27...g5 28 ♘fe2 h5 29 gxh5 ♘xh5 30 ♘f5) 28 ♗f1 ♘xd4 29 exd4 ♖c6 with equality.



27...♖e8 28 ♘g3 (even after the better 28 ♘f4 g5 29 ♘d3 ♕a3 White's weaknesses begin to unnerve him) **28...♘xd4 29 exd4?!**

Petrosian is still hoping for an advantage and makes a move on general grounds, not sensing the danger posed by the weakening of the f4- and h4-squares. After 29 ♕xd4 the game would probably have ended in a draw.

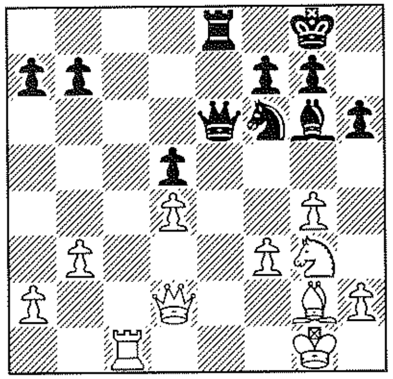
29...♖e6 30 ♖xe6 ♕xe6



As we can see, Black has solved all his

problems and his experiment with the manoeuvre ...♖c4-b4-b6-e6 has been a complete success. The d5-pawn is now opposed by a pawn at d4, the e-file has been seized and White's minor pieces are passive (the knight is a long way from e5). But the main thing is that here Spassky hits on a plan that his opponent discerns too late. White urgently needed to exchange the queens or at least the rooks, retaining the theoretical hope of exploiting the weakness of the d5-pawn.

31 ♖c1 (a so-so move; 31 ♔f2! is more accurate) **31...♗g6!**



32 ♗f1

Overlooking Black's reply. The commentators thought that 32 ♔f2 was necessary, but it seems to me that here too the plan with the manoeuvre of the knight to e6 would have created definite problems for White: 32...♕d6 33 h4 ♘d7 34 ♗f1 ♘f8 35 ♗b5 ♖d8 and ...♘e6. The queens and rooks are still on the board and the weakness at d5 is not felt, whereas the weaknesses at d4 and f4 and the open position of the white king are very sensitive.

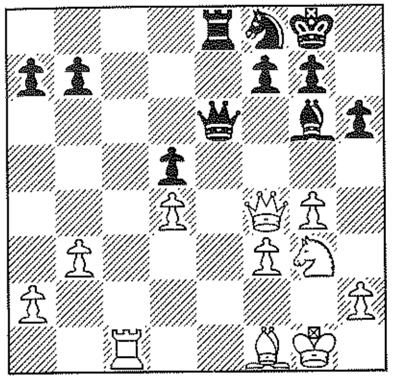
32...♘h7!

I think that after this move it became clear to Petrosian that he might have major problems. The champion thought for nine minutes and ended up in appreciable time-trouble.

33 ♕f4 (33 h4 ♕f6! 34 h5 ♘g5) **33...♘f8**

A consistent continuation of the plan. Many commentators recommended the 'more energetic' 33...♕b6 34 ♖c5 ♘g5 35 ♖xd5 (35 h4 ♘e6 36 ♕e5 ♖d8 37 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 38 ♕xd5 ♘xd4 39 ♔g2 ♘c2 40 ♔h3 is unclear) 35...♕c6, but for some reason no one considered 36 ♖c5! (36 ♕d6? ♕c1; 36 ♖d6? ♕c7 37 d5 ♖e5! or 37 ♘f5 ♗xf5 38 gxf5 ♘xf3+ 39 ♔g2 ♘h4+) 36...♕xf3 37 ♕xf3 ♘xf3+ 38 ♔f2 ♘xd4 39 ♖c7 with a quick draw.

Now, however, White must make an important decision.



34 ♖c5?

Taking account of White's time-trouble, it was essential for him to play 34 ♕e5!, effectively gaining a draw after 34...♕d7 35 ♕c7 ♕e6 36 ♕e5, or 34...f6 35 ♕xe6+ ♘xe6 36 ♔f2, while 34...♕xe5?! 35 dxe5 would even have given him the more pleasant game: 35...♘e6 (35...♖xe5? 36 f4 ♖e7 37 f5 ♗h7 38 ♖c8) 36 ♖d1 d4 37 ♘f5 ♗xf5 38 gxf5 ♘c5 39 b4. The move 34 ♕e5 is an obvious one that very much suggests itself. But by now Petrosian had lost control of the situation, apparently tired out by the tense struggle and the constant uncertainty: whether to play for a win, or make a draw...

34...♗b1! (promptly exploiting the chance opportunity) **35 a4**

If 35 ♕d2 ♕f6! 36 ♕d1, then Black has the powerful 36...♖d8! 37 ♖b5 ♗g6 38 ♖xb7 ♘e6 39 ♖b4 ♖c8 with a strong attack – it was this type of position that Spassky had in mind.

35...♘g6 36 ♕d2 ♕f6

White is now in considerable difficulties: the black queen is attacking both the d4-pawn and the weakened kingside, and the knight is threatening to leap to f4 or h4.

37 ♔f2?

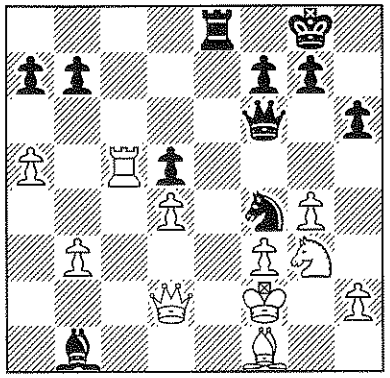
The last possibility of a defence was 37 ♖c1! ♘h4 38 ♗g2 ♗g6 39 ♔f2. After 39...b6 White's position is unpleasant, but as yet by no means lost. Black's knight would have stood at h4, whereas now it reaches f4 and his attack becomes irresistible.

37...♘f4

It is amazing how everything has changed literally in five moves! White is left with only weaknesses, whereas the black pieces have become simply 'savage', occupying ideal positions.

38 a5?

Already in serious time-trouble, Petrosian overlooks a tactical stroke. The only move was 38 ♖c3, although here too White would not have survived for long after 38...♘e6 39 ♘e2 h5!



38...♗d3!

This leads to an immediate finish. 'Such moves are rarely encountered in matches for the world championship.' (Boleslavsky)

39 ♘f5 (or 39 ♕c3 ♕h4! 40 ♔g1 ♗xf1 41 ♖c8 ♗b5) **39...♕g5! 40 ♘e3 ♕h4+ 41 ♔g1 ♗xf1 0-1**

This last move was sealed. Without resuming the game, White resigned due to 42 ♘xf1 ♖e2 or 42 ♔xf1 ♕h3+ 43 ♔g1 ♖xe3.

A very important win! Spassky levelled the scores and seized the initiative in the match.

'He created – à la Keres – positions with active piece play,' wrote Botvinnik, 'and patiently waited for the fifth hour of play to arrive, since from those events where Petrosian had played it was evident that he was at his most vulnerable in the fifth hour of a game. Perhaps the only exception was the 5th game.' Since in this game an opening catastrophe occurred.

Game 76

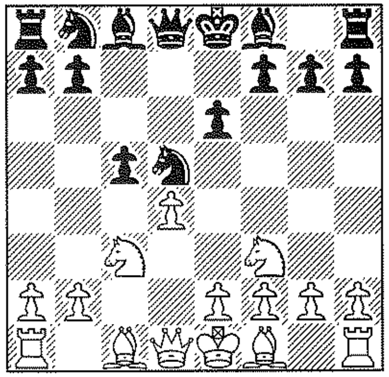
B.Spassky-T.Petrosian

World Championship Match,
Moscow 1969, 5th game
Queen's Gambit D41

1 c4

One of Spassky's virtues, which I have already mentioned, was that he could 'serve with either hand', and felt confident in the most varied openings. At that time it was sufficient to have some idea up your sleeve or a specific improvement in a popular variation, and you could already consider yourself ready for the game. In the words of Boleslavsky, 'Spassky did not object to an English Opening, but he had every justification for assuming that his opponent would take the play into a set-up from the Queen's Gambit.' That is, to the Semi-Tarrasch Defence, where White had something prepared.

2...♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5

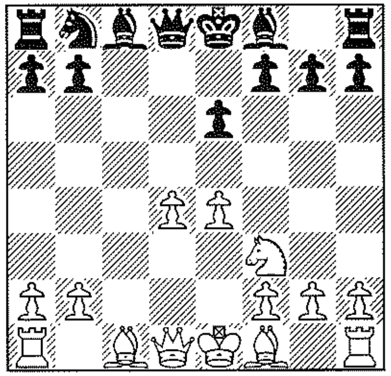


6 e4!

A surprise! Against Tal (Moscow 1963) and Langeweg (Sochi 1967) Spassky had played 6 e3 ♘c6 7 ♗c4, not objecting to 7...cxd4 8 exd4. Similar positions with an isolated d4-pawn arose from the Caro-Kann in the 1966 match, and also from the Queen's Gambit Accepted in the 1963 match, and Tigran Vartanovich believed implicitly in the solidity of Black's defences.

'Of course, Petrosian was expecting 6 e3, which had occurred hundreds of times and for which he was fully prepared. The 6 e4 variation is not considered dangerous for Black. Spassky had never employed it before and the world champion, naturally, did not remember about it during his preparations for the match. Even if Spassky had not found some significant improvement, all the same the employment of this variation would have been the kind of psychological surprise that is often more important than the objective strength of the chosen continuation. Especially since Petrosian had just suffered a defeat.' (Boleslavsky)

6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 cxd4 8 cxd4



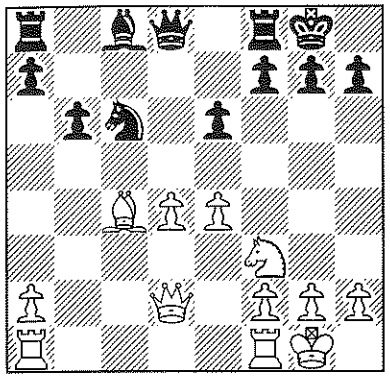
8...♗b4+

In the Spassky-Fischer match (9th game, Reykjavik 1972) Black succeeded in equalising by 8...♘c6 9 ♗c4 b5?! 10 ♗d3 ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♕xd2 a6 13 a4 0-0, but subsequently White enjoyed some success with 10 ♗e2!, for example: 10...♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2 12 ♕xd2 ♖b8 13 d5!

9 ♗d2 ♗xd2+

The difficulties of the endgame after 9...♕a5?! 10 ♖b1! ♗xd2+ 11 ♕xd2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 have been known since the time of the classic game Rubinstein-Schlechter (San Sebastian 1912): 12...0-0 13 ♗b5! a6 14 ♗d3 ♖d8 15 ♖hc1 b5 (15...♘c6 16 ♔e3) 16 ♖c7 ♘d7 17 ♔e3 ♘f6 18 ♘e5 ♗d7 19 g4!... 1-0

10 ♕xd2 0-0 11 ♗c4 ♘c6 12 0-0 b6



13 ♖ad1!

At that time this position had not been explored very much, and one of the main guides was provided by the old game Alekhine-Euwe (18th matchgame, The Hague 1937): 13 ♖fd1 ♗b7 14 ♕f4 ♖c8 (14...♕f6!?) 15 d5 exd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕e7. Later Black incorrectly exchanged on d5 and White, after successfully avoiding the exchange of queens, could have exploited the power of his passed pawn (*Volume 1, Game No.145*). But not long before the match, the game A.Zaitsev-Polugayevsky (36th USSR Championship, Alma Ata 1968/69) went 13...♘a5!? 14 ♗d3 ♗b7 15 ♕e3 ♖c8 16 ♖ac1 ♕e7 with equality.

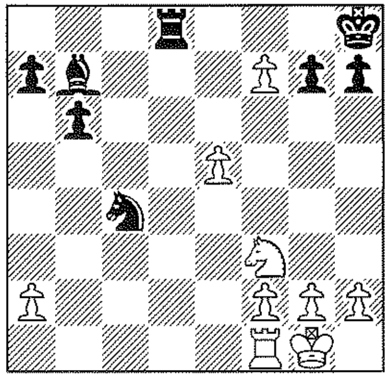
It is surprising that such a natural move as 13 ♖ad1, which immediately became standard, should have been an unexpected novelty, based on one of the longest opening preparations in Spassky's career (those were the times, when such moves were novelties!). Free piece play in a position with a mobile d4- and e4-pawn pair was undoubtedly to his taste, conforming with all the laws of harmony: quiet development, then a blow in the centre and a powerful combinative explosion.

13...♗b7

The move order 13...♘a5 14 ♗d3 ♗b7 rules out a variation that could have occurred in the game (cf. the note to White's next move), although here too, apart from 15 ♖fe1 and 15 ♕f4 (Khalifman-Karpov, Dos Hermanas 1993) it is possible to play 15 d5!? with chances of seizing the initiative: 15...exd5 16 e5 d4!? (in the book *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins* 16...♗c8 17 ♕f4 h6 is recommended, but after 18 ♘d4 and ♖fe1 White has enduring compensation for the pawn) 17 ♘xd4! ♕d5 18 ♕g5 (Lev-Onat, Haifa 1989), or 15...♕e7 16 ♖fe1 ♖ad8 17 ♘d4 g6 18 ♕h6 e5 19 ♘c2 (Lautier-Kazimdzhanov, Wijk aan Zee 2002).

14 ♖fe1

Another interesting idea is 14 d5 ♘a5 15 dxe6!? (15 ♗d3 – cf. above) 15...♘xc4 (15...♕xd2? 16 exf7+ ♔h8 17 ♘xd2 ♘xc4 18 ♘xc4 ♗xe4 19 ♘e5 and wins) 16 exf7+ ♔h8 17 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 18 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19 e5.



Analysis diagram

How to neutralise the white pawns? If 19...♗xf3?, then 20 e6! Instead Boleslavsky considered 19...♗c8?! 20 ♖e1 g6 21 h4?! ♖f8! 22 e6 ♗xe6 23 ♖xe6 ♖xf7 with a probable draw, but White can win by 21 ♘g5! ♘xe5 22 f4 h6 23 ♖xe5 ♖f8 24 ♘e4 or 23...♗d7 24 ♖e7(d5) hxg5 25 ♖xd7!

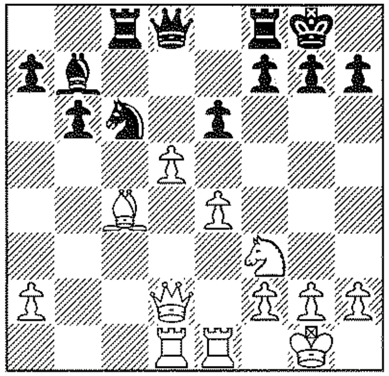
There only remains 19...♖c8!, and after 20 e6! ♗d5 21 ♘g5 ♘d6 22 ♖d1 ♗xe6 (22...♗xa2? 23 h4 and wins) 23 ♘xe6 (or 23 f8♕+ ♖xf8 24 ♘xe6 ♖c8) 23...♘xf7 24 h3 Black is obliged to fight for a draw in an inferior endgame, for example: 24...♔g8 25 ♖d7 ♖e8 26 ♖xa7 ♖xe6 27 ♖a8+ ♘d8 28 ♖xd8+ ♔f7 etc.

14...♖c8

14...♘e7?! would not be to everyone's taste after 15 d5 exd5 16 exd5 ♘f5 17 ♘e5! ♘d6 18 ♘c6! (Petrosian-Korchnoi, 6th matchgame, Ciocco 1977), but 14...♘a5 15 ♗d3 ♖c8 (15...♕d6!? Boleslavsky) 16 d5! exd5 17 e5! ♘c4 was possible – cf. the note to Black's 15th move.

15 d5!

An instant reply. Whereas Petrosian thought for 13 minutes: he had to make a difficult choice here.



15...exd5?!

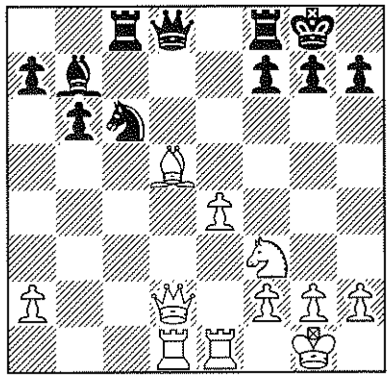
Of course, Tigran Vartanovich considered 15...♘a5 and saw the draw after 16 dxe6?! ♕xd2! (not 16...♘xc4? 17 exf7+ ♔h8 18 ♕xd8 ♖cxd8 19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 e5 and wins) 17 exf7+ ♔h8 18 ♘xd2 ♘xc4 19 ♘xc4 ♖xc4 20 e5 ♗c8! 21 e6 ♗xe6 22 ♖xe6 ♖c7 23 ♖e8 ♖cxf7 24 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25 ♖d7 a5 26 ♖b7 ♖c8 27 g3 ♔g8.

But he also saw a sharp pawn sacrifice – 16 ♗d3! exd5 (Black fails to equalise after 16...♕d6 17 dxe6 ♕xe6? 18 ♘d4 ♕e5 19 ♘f5 or 17...fxe6 18 ♗b5! ♕xd2 19 ♖xd2) 17 e5! ♘c4 18 ♕f4, which did not appeal to him. And indeed, in the later game Polugayevsky-

Tal, Black suffered a swift catastrophe after missing the best defence 18...♖c6! (*Game No.23*). In deciding to avoid these dangers, Petrosian goes from the frying pan into the fire.

16 ♗xd5!

White would also have retained some advantage with 16 exd5!? ♘a5 17 ♗f1 ♕d6 18 ♘g5 ♖cd8 (18...h6 19 ♘e4 ♕g6 20 ♕f4 ♖fd8 21 d6; 18...♕h6?! 19 d6) 19 ♕d3! ♕h6! 20 ♕f5 ♗c8 21 ♕f4 f6 22 ♘e6 ♕xf4 23 ♘xf4 ♖d6 24 ♗d3!? But the move 16 ♗xd5! is more tempting: this bishop is so strong, that sooner or later Black will almost certainly have to take on d5, and then White will acquire a passed pawn on this square. For Spassky, playing such a position was sheer pleasure!



16...♘a5?

Now the knight is stuck on the edge of the board for a long time, and Black's position really becomes difficult. Korchnoi recommended 16...♕e7 17 ♕f4 (I would also check 17 e5) 17...h6 – according to Boleslavsky, 'this is hopeless on account of 18 ♘h4! and ♘f5-d6,' although after 18...♕c7! White still has to look for an advantage: 19 e5! (19 ♕g4 ♘e7!; 19 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 20 ♘f5 ♘e7 with equality) 19...♘e7 (19...♘d8? 20 ♘f5!) 20 ♗b3! ♖cd8 21 ♖d6! etc. Boleslavsky suggested 17...♖c7!? with the idea of 18 ♘h4 ♕e5, but he was afraid of 18 h4, although after 18...h6 (18...♘d8? 19 ♘d4!) 19 h5 ♖d8 Black can successfully defend.

Black could also have considered the immediate 16...♕c7!? 17 ♖c1 ♕e7 (*Boris Spassky's 300 wins*), or 17 ♕g5 h6 18 ♕g4 ♘e7 19 ♘d4!? (little is promised by 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♖d7 ♖c7, or 20 e5 ♖cd8 21 e6 ♖xd1 22 ♖xd1 ♕c8) 19...♖cd8! (19...♗xd5?! 20 exd5 ♖cd8? 21 ♘e6!; 19...♘xd5? 20 ♘f5! ♕c3 21 exd5) 20 ♖c1 ♕b8!, and the tactical stroke 21 ♘e6!? fxe6 22 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 23 ♕xe7 ♗xd5 24 exd5 only leads to a draw: 24...♖fe8! 25 ♕f7 ♖f8 26 ♕e6 ♕f4 27 ♖c2 (27 ♖f1 ♖d6) 27...♕d4 and ...♕xd5.

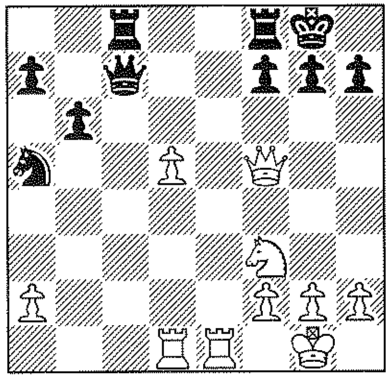
17 ♕f4! ♕c7

Or 17...♕e7 18 ♘d4! By this point Petrosian had already spent more than an hour, and Spassky – just 21 minutes.

18 ♕f5!

Avoiding the exchange of queens, by analogy with the Alekhine-Euwe game. After 10 minutes' thought Black accepts the inevitable.

18...♗xd5 19 exd5



19...♕c2

'After 19...♘c4 (to transfer the knight to d6) 20 ♘g5 g6 21 ♕h3 h5 22 ♘e4 ♘d6 23 ♘f6+ ♔g7 24 ♕g3! White's attack is decisive. 19...♕d6 is also unsuccessful (it has long been known that the queen is a poor blockader) after 20 ♘g5 ♕g6 21 ♕xg6 hxg6 22 d6! ♘b7 23 d7 ♖cd8 24 ♖e7 ♘c5 25 ♖d6 ♘b7 (25...f6 26 ♘e6!) 26 ♖c6 (*26 ♖d5!? – G.K.*) 26...♘c5 27 ♖c7, and if 27...f6 there follows 28 ♖xc5!' (Bondarevsky)

20 ♕f4!?

Retaining the queens, even at the cost of the a2-pawn. Spassky spent 20 minutes on this move. He was, of course, hesitating: the technical solution 20 ♕xc2! ♖xc2 21 ♖e7! ♖xa2 22 ♖xa7 ♖c2 23 d6 was good, for example: 23...♖cc8? 24 d7 ♖b8 25 ♘d4 and wins (Boleslavsky), 23...h6 24 ♘e5!, or 23...♖d8 24 ♘g5! (not 24 ♘e5 ♖c5! 25 f4 ♘c6) 24...♘c6 (24...♖c5 25 f4!) 25 ♖c7 f6 (25...♘b4 26 ♖b7) 26 ♘f7 ♖a8 27 g4 ♘b4 28 ♖b7 ♘c6 29 d7 ♘d8 30 ♖a7! ♖b8 31 ♘d6 h6 32 ♖e1 and wins. But he took a more creative decision: by threatening an attack on the king, it was possible to win even more quickly.

20...♕xa2

In Geller's opinion, it was more tenacious to play 20...♖ce8 21 d6 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♕d3 (not 22...♕xa2? 23 d7 ♕d5 24 ♕c7), although here too after 23 ♘d4 ♘b7 24 h3! things are difficult for Black.

21 d6! ♖cd8 22 d7

'The passed pawn, after reaching the seventh rank, ties down both rooks. Black's position is hopeless.' (Bondarevsky) However, he still has some practical chances.

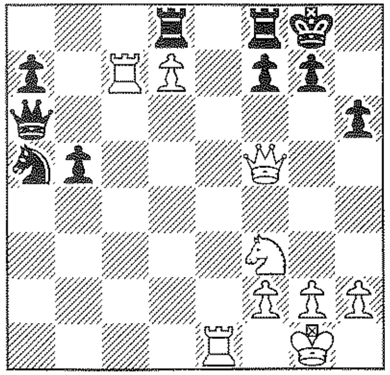
22...♕c4

In the event of 22...♕c2 23 ♖c1! ♕d3! (if 23...♕b3 24 ♕c7 ♕b5 White wins by 25 ♖e7! h6 26 ♘e5 or 25...♘b3 26 ♖ce1) 24 ♖ed1 Black's position is no better than in the game: 24...♕b5 25 ♖c7! (25 ♕c7 ♕f5 26 ♕xa7 is slower) 25...a6 (25...♘c6 26 ♕d6!) 26 ♕e4 (26 ♕d6!?) 26...♘b3 (if 26...♕b2, then 27 ♘g5 g6 28 ♕e7!) 27 ♘e5 ♘c5 28 ♕d5 and wins, or 24...♕b3(e2) 25 ♕c7! ♕e6 26 ♖d6 ♕f5 27 ♖e1! h6 28 ♖dd1 (with the threat of ♕xd8!) 28...♕c5 29 ♕xa7 etc.

23 ♕f5! h6

After 23...♕c6 24 ♘e5 ♕e6 the cold-blooded 25 ♕xe6 fxe6 26 ♖c1 (Fritz) was possible, but I prefer 25 ♕c2 (threatening 26 ♕c7 a6 27 ♘g6! ♕xg6 28 ♕xd8) 25...♕f6 26 ♕c7 ♖a8 27 ♖e3! ♕d8 28 ♕d6, or 25...b5 26 ♕c5! ♕b6 27 ♕d5 with an overwhelming advantage.

24 ♖c1! ♕a6?! (24...♕a4 was more tenacious, with the hope of 25 ♘e5 f6!, although after 25 ♖c7! things are essentially unchanged: say, 25...a6 26 ♕d5 ♕b3 27 ♕d6 ♕b2 28 h3 etc.) **25 ♖c7 b5**



26 ♘d4?

A seemingly natural move, which was passed over by many commentators or even, as in *Informator* (No.7/488) and the book *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*, accompanied by an exclamation mark. In fact, this is a mistake that put White's victory in jeopardy! 26 ♖e8! ♘b7 (26...♕d6 27 ♖c8!) 27 ♖c8! would have been quickly decisive, for example: 27...♕a1+ 28 ♘e1 ♕d4 29 ♕xb5, or 27...♕a4 28 h3 ♕d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♕d6+ 30 ♘e5 f6 (30...♕f6 31 ♕e4) 31 ♕g6!, and 31...fxe5 fails to 32 ♖cxd8! ♕xg6 33 ♖xf8+ and ♖h8 mate.

Here the difference between human thinking and computer calculation is clearly seen: the human does not want to allow the check at a1, and have to make the 'unaesthetic' move ♘e1, whereas the machine simply has no such qualms.

26...♕b6?

Apparently already demoralised, Petrosian misses an unexpected saving opportunity – 26...♕d6! 27 ♘xb5 ♕d2 28 ♖f1 ♘b3! 29 ♖xa7 ♘d4! 30 ♘xd4 ♕xd4, 'and it is still not easy for White to make use of his powerful pawn.' (Boleslavsky, Bondarevsky) I would have said – not at all easy (the weakness of the back rank!):

1) 31 ♖b7 ♖b8! (31...g6 32 ♕b5 ♔g7 33

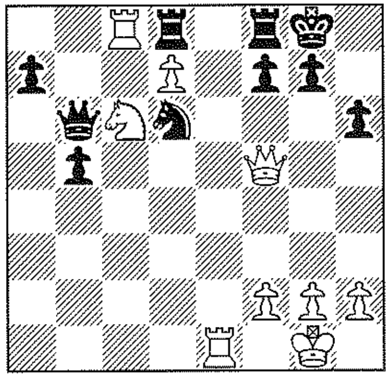
♖e1! is not so clear) 32 ♖c7 (after 32 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 33 ♖e1 g6 the d7-pawn falls even more quickly) 32...♖b6 33 ♖e1 ♖f6 34 ♕c5 ♕xc5 35 ♖xc5 ♖d6 36 ♖c7 ♖d8 with a draw;

2) 31 ♖c7 g6 32 ♕b5 ♔g7 33 ♖e1 (33 ♖fc1 f6!) 33...♖b8! 34 ♕e2 (34 ♖c4 ♖xb5 35 ♖xd4 ♖d8, then ...♖b7 and ...♔f6-e7) 34...♖b2 35 ♕f3 ♖d2 36 g3 ♖d8 37 ♖e7 ♕f6 38 ♕e3 ♖d1+ 39 ♔g2 ♖8xd7!

27 ♖c8! (now there is no defence) **27...♘b7**

It was totally bad to play 27...♕xd4? 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♖e8+, or 27...b4 28 ♖e8! ♕xd4? 29 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 31 ♕c5+!! ♕xc5 32 d8♕ mate, while after 27...g6 the simple 28 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 29 ♕xb5 is decisive.

28 ♘c6 ♘d6



29 ♘xd8! (an elegant concluding stroke) **29...♘xf5 30 ♘c6 1-0**

And Spassky took the lead.

'After the game,' writes Bondarevsky, 'some masters asked me: "What do you think, where did Petrosian make the decisive mistake?" Such a question, in my view, is the best characterisation of Spassky's play. He won in excellent style.' This is true, but after a careful analysis we can see that the game is not free of serious mistakes. The first is 15...exd5?! (avoiding a critical opening duel), the second – 16...♘a5? (a violation of Tarrasch's commandments), and the third, fatal one – 26...♕b6? instead of 26...♕d6! In turn, White could have avoided allowing the opponent this last chance, by playing 26 ♖e8!

In connection with these striking victories, one recalls Spassky's recent reply to the question as to what enabled him in the 1960s to defeat all the strongest players: 'My forte was the middlegame. I had a good feeling for the critical moments of the play. This undoubtedly compensated for my lack of opening preparation and, possibly, not altogether perfect play in the endgame. In my games things often did not reach the endgame!'

In my opinion, the 4th and 5th games played a decisive role in the match, although, of course, Spassky still had numerous problems in later games. After his win in the 8th game he had an overwhelming advantage in the 9th, but let it slip during the resumption. As Boris Vasilievich told me, he suddenly ran out of energy: he felt so tired, that he even offered a draw in what was still a clearly superior position. And then, feeling out of sorts, he lost two games in a row. The match score was now level and he had to start all over again.

Things took a difficult course: in the 14th game the challenger went wrong and only saved himself by a miracle after the adjournment. And in the 13th and 15th games after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 Spassky chose the harmless 5 ♕e2. 'The fact that he twice, playing White in the Petroff Defence – an opening in which White can obtain active piece play – immediately exchanged queens, obtained a closed and dull position and drew both games round about the 20th move, is a mystery that I cannot explain,' Botvinnik wrote at the time. But soon the mystery was explained by Bondarevsky: 'The depression that began with Spassky after the 9th game had not yet passed. In such a state is there any point in going in for sharp variations? The time for the decisive battles had not yet arrived!'

So, what was the role of the 4th and 5th games? It was that after these games Spassky realised: he could and should win the match. He acquired confidence: however difficult it might be, his time had arrived! The feeling of doom that Petrosian displayed from the 4th to the 9th games was already hanging over the stage. And the last third of the match proved simply catastrophic for him: he lost three 'Black' games one after another. So Spassky's superiority in the first third reflected the real balance of force. In the second third both psychology and reserves of energy had their effect, but when the tired opponents reached the finishing straight, everything at once fell into place.

And here is another mystery: why did Petrosian give up the Petroff Defence? I will remind you: in the 17th and 19th games he lost in the Sicilian Defence, and in the 21st in a Ruy Lopez. That is, in openings that were not characteristic of him. Generally speaking, in this match there were a staggering number of Sicilians by Petrosian. This is indeed very strange! Where were his favourite French, Caro-Kann? A mystery, shrouded in darkness... Even so, let us try to open the curtain slightly.

'To expect that Spassky would again go in for a harmless continuation would have been too optimistic,' writes Boleslavsky in his notes to the 17th game, 'and the Petroff Defence is not one of those reliable openings that should be employed regularly. Petrosian decided to join battle and go in for a complicated game with chances for both sides. He chose the Paulsen Variation, which had occurred in the 1st game.'

This, it would seem, is the key to understanding the entire problem: the success in the 1st game had disoriented Petrosian! He thought that Spassky might somewhere delay, lose the thread of the game, concede the initiative – that is, he decided that his opponent was not altogether confident in playing certain set-ups in the Open Sicilian. He thought it was not without reason that, both in the 1966 match and in the Candidates matches, Spassky had played only the Closed Variation (of which Tigran Vartanovich was not at all afraid: Black obtained many chances there). It appears that this thought would not leave Petrosian in peace, and an incorrect match plan occurred to him: to try and win also with Black.

But Spassky brilliantly refuted this venture, not allowing his opponent any chances. He won the match ahead of schedule by 12½-10½ and became the 10th world champion.

...Thirty years later Boris Vasilievich recalled his battles with Petrosian with his characteristic humour: 'In the first match I flew at him all the time, like a kind of young, "newly-fledged" tiger, but that was just what Tigran wanted. But in the second match I realised that with him you had to act like a bear, and I now began pressing on him with my paws – he didn't like this. I think that he lost the match because he already sensed that he was ruling but not holding power, and that it was time to give way to someone younger.'

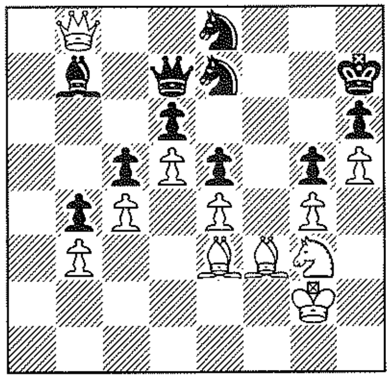
The first 'Oscar' Winner

The International Association of the Chess Press (AIPE), founded in 1968, awarded the chess 'Oscar' to the best player of the year, as judged by a poll of leading journalists, grandmaster writers and FIDE officials. It need hardly be said that the winner of the first two 'Oscars' (1968 and 1969) was Spassky.

His convincing competitive victories were accompanied by striking creative achievements, as recorded several times in the list of 'ten best games' in the six-monthly *Chess Informator*. Spassky took first place in three successive volumes (7, 8 and 9) – thanks to the spectacularly crushing defeats that he inflicted on Petrosian (19th matchgame, Moscow 1969), Penrose (Palma de Mallorca 1969) and Larsen ('Match of the Century', Belgrade 1970, round 2).

I have already mentioned the first of these games (cf. *Game No.49*), while the second continued the Bronstein-Tal combinative line (*Volume 2, Game No.133*) aimed at creating a pawn avalanche.

Game 77
B.Spassky-J.Penrose
Palma de Mallorca 1969



37 ♗xc5!! dxc5 38 ♕xe5 ♘g8

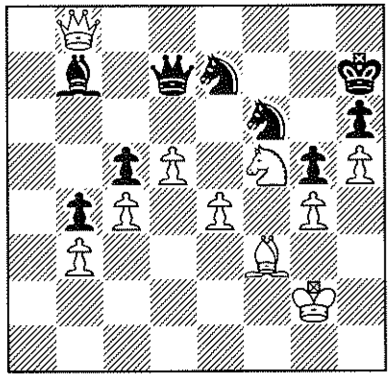
After 38...♕d6 39 ♕xd6?! ♘xd6 40 e5 ♘f7 41 ♗e4+ ♔g7 42 d6 ♗xe4+ 43 ♘xe4 ♘c6! (but not 43...♘c8? 44 d7 ♘e7 45 ♘xc5 and wins) 44 e6 ♘fe5 45 ♔g3 ♘d3 46 e7 ♔f7 47 ♘f6 ♘xe7 48 dxe7 ♔xe7 49 ♘g8+ ♔f8 50 ♘xh6 ♘c1 Black gets away with a slight fright. However, the avalanche of pawns is irresistible after 39 ♕a1! ♔g8 40 e5!

39 ♕b8 ♘ef6

If 39...♘e7, then 40 ♔f2! (40 e5?! ♘xd5 with equality) 40...♘c8 41 e5 etc.

40 ♘f5 (of course, not 40 e5? ♘xd5!) **40...♘e7**

Now there follows another pretty sacrifice.



41 ♘xh6!

The only way to win. The hasty 41 e5? is refuted by 41...♘xf5 42 gxf5 g4! 43 ♗e2 ♘xd5!, while after 41 ♘xe7?! ♕xe7 42 e5 ♘e8 43 ♗e4+ ♔g7 44 ♗g6 ♘c7 45 ♕xb7 ♕xe5, or 41 ♘d6 ♗c8! (41...♗a6?! 42 e5) 42 e5?! ♘xh5! the outcome is still far from clear.

41...♘exd5

41...♔xh6 also loses by force after 42 ♕f8+ ♔h7 43 ♕f7+ ♔h8 44 ♕xf6+ ♔h7 (44...♔g8 45 ♕xg5+) 45 ♕f7+ ♔h6 46 e5.

42 cxd5 ♔xh6 43 ♕f8+ ♕g7 44 ♕xc5 ♘d7 45 ♕d6+ ♔h7 46 e5! ♔h8 (46...♕xe5? 47 ♕xd7+, or 46...♘xe5? 47 ♗e4+ ♔g8 48 ♕b8+) **47 h6 ♕h7 48 e6!** (the pawns sweep away everything in their path) **48...♕c2+**

If 48...♘f6 White wins by 49 ♕b8+! (49 ♕f8+ ♘g8 50 ♔g3 ♗xd5! 51 ♗xd5 ♕c7+ is inaccurate) 49...♕g8 (49...♘g8 50 ♕e5+) 50 ♕xb7.

49 ♔g3 1-0

There is no good reply.

However, the greatest sensation of all was caused by Spassky's miniature with Larsen, played not just anywhere, but on top board in the historic 'Match of the Century' between teams from the USSR and the Rest of the World. The course of this game was watched by more than two thousand spectators.

Game 78
B.Larsen-B.Spassky
'Match of the Century',
Belgrade 1970, 2nd round
Larsen Opening A01

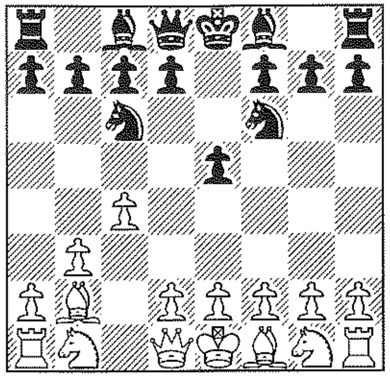
1 b3 e5

Not long before this game Larsen had spectacularly defeated Kavalek (Lugano 1970) after 1...c5 2 ♗b2 ♘c6 3 c4 e5 4 g3 d6 5 ♗g2 ♘ge7 6 e3 g6 7 ♘e2 ♗g7 8 ♘bc3 0-0 (8...♗e6!) 9 d3 ♗e6 10 ♘d5 ♕d7 11 h4! f5?! (11...h5) 12 ♕d2 ♖ae8?! 13 h5 b5 14 hxg6 hxg6 15 ♘ec3 bxc4 16 dxc4 e4 17 0-0-0 ♘e5 18 ♘f4 ♖d8 (if 18...g5 19 ♘xe6 ♘d3+, then 20 ♕xd3! exd3 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7 22 ♘d5+ ♔g6 23 ♗f3 and wins) 19 ♔b1 ♗f7?! 20 g4! etc.

2 ♗b2 ♘c6 3 c4

It is hardly any better to play 3 e3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3?! e4 5 ♘d4, as later Larsen tried against Parma and Ledic (Vinkovci 1970), in view of 5...♗c5 6 ♘xc6 dxc6 7 ♘c3 ♗f5 etc.

3...♘f6



4 ♘f3?!

One senses the influence of Nimzowitsch, who after 1 e4 introduced 1...c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6?!, for example: 3 e5 ♘d5 4 ♘c3 ♘xc3 5 dxc3 b6? 6 ♗d3? (6 e6!; 6 ♗c4!?) 6...♗b7 7 ♗f4 ♕c7 8 ♗g3 (8 ♕e2!) 8...e6 9 0-0 ♗e7 etc. (Michell-Nimzowitsch, Marienbad 1925).

But is it worth conceding so much space to the opponent? Soon afterwards the following line became fashionable: 4 e3!? (4 g3 d5 with equality) 4...d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 a3 ♗d6 (Larsen-Spassky, Leiden 1970), 4...d6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 d4 ♗f5 (Larsen-Portisch, Siegen Olympiad 1970), or 4...♗e7 5 a3!, as played by Fischer against Tukmakov and Andersson (cf. Volume 4).

4...e4 5 ♘d4 ♗c5 6 ♘xc6

6 e3? ♗xd4 7 exd4 d5 favours Black (Larsen). However, he already has a very comfortable game in any case.

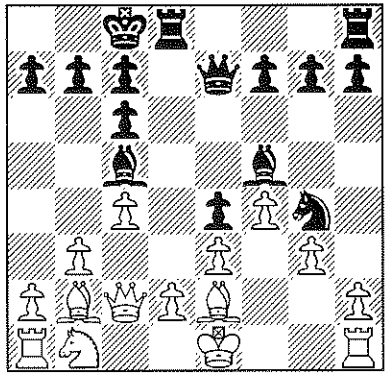
6...dxc6 7 e3 (7 d4 exd4 8 ♕xd3 ♕e7!) **7...♗f5 8 ♕c2 ♕e7 9 ♗e2** (9 d4 exd3 10 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 ♖d8 etc.) **9...0-0-0 10 f4?**

White's only serious mistake, which encounters a staggeringly accurate and pretty refutation. 'Larsen was evidently hoping for 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 11 ♘c3, but this idea was not realised.' (Spassky)

In the opinion of Krogius, '10 ♘c3 followed by 0-0-0 was essential,' although after 10...♖d7! 11 0-0-0?! ♖hd8 Black has a clear advantage. Larsen's recommendation 10 a3!? is more interesting.

10...♘g4! (immediately exploiting the weakening of the kingside) **11 g3**

It was no better to play 11 ♗xg4 ♕h4+ and ...♕xg4 (Larsen), 11 0-0 ♖xd2! 12 ♘xd2 (12 ♕xd2 ♗xe3+) 12...♘xe3 13 ♕c1 ♘xf1+ 14 ♔xf1 ♕h4! 15 g3 ♕xh2 16 ♔e1 e3 (Emms), or 11 ♗xg7 ♖hg8 12 ♗b2 (12 ♕b2 ♗xe3!) 12...♘xe3! (the simplest) 13 dxe3 ♕h4+ 14 g3 ♖xg3 with crushing threats.



11...h5!

'Choosing the way that does not leave White any chances,' writes Spassky. '11...♖xd2 looked tempting, but after 12 ♘xd2 ♘xe3 13 ♕c3 ♖d8 Black's task would have been more complicated.' As would also be the case after 12 ♕xd2 ♖d8 13 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 14 ♗d4 (14 ♕c2? ♖d1+) 14...♗b4 15 ♘c3 c5 etc.

12 h3 (12 ♘c3 ♖xd2!) **12...h4!**

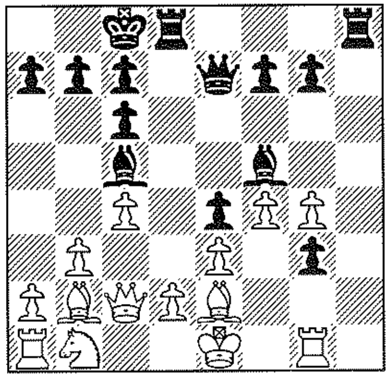
By sacrificing a piece, Black penetrates into the enemy position.

13 hxg4

'Larsen thought over this move for about an hour. But there was already no way to save the game: 13 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 14 hxg4 hxg3 15 ♖g1 ♖h1! 16 ♖xh1 g2 17 ♖g1 ♕h4+ 18 ♔e2 ♕xg4+ 19 ♔e1 ♕g3+ 20 ♔e2 ♕f3+ 21 ♔e1 ♗e7 (*21...♗xe3! – G.K.*) with unavoidable mate, or 20 ♔d1 ♕f2 21 ♕xe4 ♕xg1+ 22 ♔c2 ♕f2 and wins.' (Spassky) Here 22...♗xe3! also wins. A similar variation is 18 ♔d1 ♕f2 19 ♕xe4 ♕xg1+ 20 ♔c2 ♕f2 21 ♕f5+ ♔b8 etc. (Emms), or 20...♗xe3! 21 ♕f5+ ♖d7.

Apart from 15...♖h1!, it is also possible to play 15...♖h2 (Larsen), for example: 16 ♕c3 (16 ♖xg3 ♕h4; 16 ♘c3(a3) ♗xe3!) 16...♕h4 17 ♔d1 (17 ♘a3 ♕xg4) 17...♖h1 18 ♖xh1 ♕xh1+ 19 ♔c2 g2 20 ♘a3 ♕xa1 21 ♗xa1 ♗xa3! and ...g1♕ (Emms).

13...hxg3 14 ♖g1



14...♖h1!!

A brilliant concluding stroke. 'A thousand years may pass, and the world champion's brilliant sacrifice will be for ever verdant in his laurel wreath,' the Yugoslav press wrote at that time. A quarter of a century later a dual solution was discovered – 14...♗xe3! 15 dxe3 ♖h1! (I.Sukhin).

'After 14...♕h4 15 ♖g2 ♕h1+ 16 ♗f1 ♗xg4 17 ♕xe4 ♖he8 18 ♗e5 f6 19 ♘c3 White could still have resisted,' thinks Larsen, although after 18...f5! 19 ♕c2 ♗h3 his sufferings would also not have lasted long: 20 d4 ♗b4+ 21 ♘d2 ♗xg2 22 0-0-0 ♗xd2+ etc.

15 ♖xh1 g2 16 ♖f1

'After 16 ♖g1 ♕h4+ 17 ♔d1 ♕h1 18 ♕c3 ♕xg1+ 19 ♔c2 ♕f2 20 gxf5 ♕xe2 21 ♘a3 the simplest way to win is 21...♗b4. During the game I was captivated by another possibility: 21...♕d3+ 22 ♕xd3 exd3+ 23 ♔c3 ♗xe3 (23...a5?! 24 ♘c2!) 24 dxe3 d2 25 ♖d1 ♖h8!, promoting one of the pawns to a queen.' (Spassky)

16...♕h4+ 17 ♔d1 gxf1♕+ 0-1

With the unavoidable 18 ♗xf1 ♗xg4+ 19 ♔c1 ♕e1+ 20 ♕d1 ♕xd1 mate. White resigned, and there was a storm of applause in the auditorium. A worthy continuation of the romantic traditions of the 19th century!

A month later the world champion won a four-player match-tournament in Leiden: 1. Spassky – 7 out of 12 (undefeated); 2. Donner – 6; 3-4. Botvinnik and Larsen – 5½.

The crowning point of Spassky's period as champion was his win over Bobby Fischer at the Olympiad in Siegen (September 1970). Let us remember what happened.

'The USSR-USA match was awaited with great impatience and interest: on the top board Spassky was due to play Fischer. In view of the young American's impressive successes, his meeting with the world champion acquired a special significance. Had it gone in Bobby's favour, many would have been ready to draw far-reaching conclusions. The crucial nature of the clash between the two strongest players was obvious. Three thousand chess enthusiasts arrived in Siegen to witness this exciting duel. Tickets to the Siegenlandhall were sold out long before the start of the round. Even those fortunate enough to get into the tournament hall found it incredibly difficult to force their way through to the board where Spassky and Fischer were playing. The most energetic of them crowded round the board in picturesque, many-tiered, sculptural-like groups. A special hall, to where this game was relayed, was jam-packed, and the organisers additionally had to set up four demonstration boards in the foyer.' (Taimanov)

'Fischer's admirers were sure of his success and they ordered in advance a banquet in the winner's honour. In the restaurant of our hotel, tables were set out, awaiting only a mere "trifle" – the conclusion of the game. Apparently Bobby himself was also expecting to win; in any event, he had no thoughts of a compromise and I would even say that he avoided one.' (Korchnoi)

'Boris was obviously nervous before and during the game, and he smoked one cigarette after another, but he managed to control his nerves.' (Mednis)

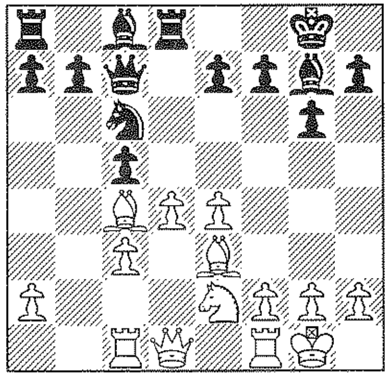
Game 79

B.Spassky-R.Fischer

Siegen Olympiad 1970

Grünfeld Defence D87

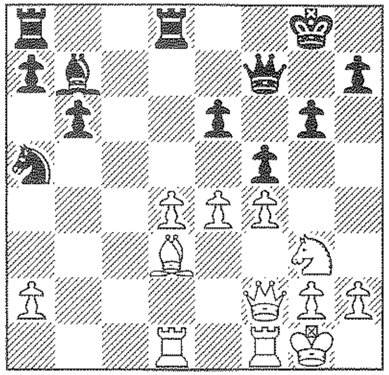
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 ♕c7 11 ♖c1 ♖d8



This opening *tabiya*, developed by Smyslov, was very familiar to both players: it had occurred in their game in the super-tournament in Santa Monica (1966).

12 h3

Preparing f2-f4 (12 f4 ♗g4!; for the more modest 12...e6 – cf. *Volume 2, Game No.99*). The Santa Monica game went 12 ♕e1 (later they switched to 12 ♕d2, and then also to 12 ♗f4!?) 12...e6 13 f4 ♘a5 14 ♗d3 f5! 15 ♖d1! b6 16 ♕f2 cxd4 (16...fxe4!? 17 ♗xe4 ♗b7) 17 ♗xd4! ♗xd4 (17...♗b7!? 18 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 19 ♘d4 ♕f7) 18 cxd4 ♗b7 19 ♘g3 ♕f7 (19...♕g7!? Fischer).



Analysis diagram

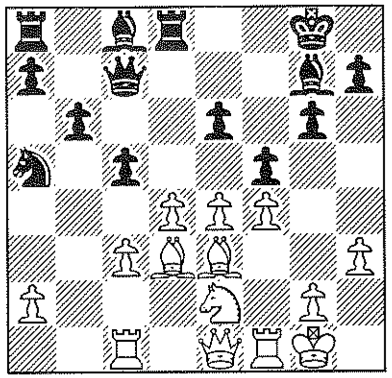
20 d5!! fxe4 21 dxe6 ♕xe6 22 f5! ♕f7 23 ♗xe4 ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♖f8! 25 ♗b1! ♕f6 26 ♕c2! ♔h8 27 fxg6 hxg6 28 ♕d2?! (Spassky gives 28 ♘h5! ♕f7? 29 ♕c3+ ♔h7 30 ♕g3 ♗c8 31 ♖c1! ♗d7 32 ♗d3! ♖c8 33 ♖f1 and wins, or 28...♗e4! 29 ♘xf6 ♗xc2 30 ♗xc2 ♖xf6 31 ♖d7 with the better endgame) 28...♔g7 29 ♖f1 ♕e7 30 ♕d4+ ♖f6 31 ♘e4 ♗xe4 32 ♗xe4 ♕c5 33 ♕xc5 ♖xf1+?! (the correct continuation was 33...bxc5! 34 ♖c1 c4 35 ♖c3 ♖e6 36 ♗f3 ♔f6 37 ♔f2 g5 with a draw) 34 ♔xf1 bxc5 35 h4! ♘c4 36 ♔e2?! (36 ♔f2!) 36...♘e5?! (36...♔h6! 37 g4 ♘e5 38 ♗f3 g5! 39 h5 c4 40 ♔e3 c3 with a draw – Averbakh) 37 ♔e3 ♔f6 38 ♔f4 ♘f7 39 ♔e3?! (39 ♗d5 g5+ 40 hxg5+ ♘xg5 41 ♗g8! and wins – Spassky) 39...g5? (39...♘h6! 40 ♔d3 ♘f5 41 ♔c4 ♔e5! 42 ♗xf5 ♔xf5 with a draw – Gligoric) 40 h5 ♘h6?! 41 ♔d3 and White won.

'Commenting on that game, I drew attention to 12...♕a5! with good chances of equalising: it is hard for White to prevent ...cxd4 and the exchange of queens (*for example: 13 ♖d1 cxd4 14 cxd4 ♕xe1 15 ♖fxe1 b6 with equality – G.K.*). It is possible that Fischer went in for this position with my recommendation in mind, and since I did not have anything prepared, I was forced to seek new paths. I thought for quite a long time over my 12th move. But, being a practical player and fearful of wasting precious time, I chose a standard plan, which did not give me any advantage.' (Spassky)

12...b6 13 f4 e6 14 ♕e1 ♘a5

I should remind you that Gligoric-Smyslov (Kiev 1959) went 14...♗b7 15 ♕f2?! (15 f5 ♘a5!) 15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 f5! 17 e5 (17 ♘g3 ♕d7) 17...c4 18 ♗c2 ♘c6 19 g4 ♘e7 with advantage to Black (*Volume 2, Game No.91*).

15 ♗d3 f5!



Following in Smyslov's footsteps! 'A typical move in such positions. Black not only prevents f4-f5, but also reduces the activity of the opponent's bishops. By blocking the f4-pawn, he restricts the e3-bishop, while the d3-bishop also runs up against a pawn.' (Bondarevsky)

16 g4!

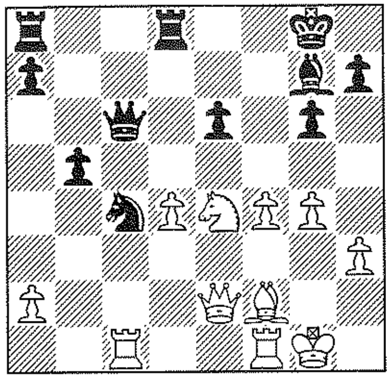
An aggressive, although also risky course, significantly weakening his own king's defences. 16 ♕f2?! ♗b7 would have led to a position from the Gligoric-Smyslov game. It was hardly any better to play 16 ♖d1 ♗b7 17 e5 c4 18 ♗c2 ♘c6 and ...♘e7.

16...fxe4 (16...♗b7 – *Game No.70*) **17 ♗xe4 ♗b7 18 ♘g3 ♘c4 19 ♗xb7?!**

'Worthy of attention was 19 ♗f2 ♗xe4 20 ♘xe4!? (20 ♕xe4 ♘d2 21 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 22 ♖fd1 ♘f3+ 23 ♔h1 ♖e8 24 ♕d5 ♕xf4 favours Black) 20...♕xf4 21 ♗h4 (21 dxc5?! ♘e5!) 21...♕e3+ 22 ♕xe3 ♘xe3 23 ♖f3 cxd4 24 ♗xd8 etc.' (Bondarevsky) That is, 24...♖xd8 25 cxd4 ♗xd4 with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

19...♕xb7 20 ♗f2 (20 dxc5?! ♖d3) **20...♕c6 21 ♕e2 cxd4 22 cxd4 b5 23 ♘e4!?**

23 ♖fd1 ♖f8! was insipid. 'Thanks to White's routine play, Fischer has gained good prospects, and already I am practically forced to sacrifice a pawn.' (Spassky) 'Boris is able to maintain the balance in any position by tactical means, which is especially valuable.' (Korchnoi)



23...♗xd4

'Fischer prefers to take the pawn. Why? Well, because he simply likes having extra pawns. I noticed this little weakness of his a long time ago. Black should have considered 23...♖f8 24 ♘c5 ♖ae8 with the advantage.' (Spassky) 'But after 25 a4! a6 26 ♘xa6 ♕xa6 27 axb5 ♕xb5 28 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 29 ♖xc4 ♖xf4 Black, although he stands slightly better, has no winning chances. It is natural that Fischer should try to find a better continuation.' (Bondarevsky)

24 ♘g5 ♗xf2+

'Black is playing for a win, otherwise he would have retreated with 24...♗f6.' (Spassky) For example: 25 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 26 ♘xe6 ♖d3 with equality, and 27 ♘c7 ♖ad8 28 ♘xb5? fails to 28...♘d2 (Bondarevsky). But after Mednis's recommendation 24...♗b6, 25 ♘xe6! (25 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 26 ♘xe6 ♖d3!) 25...♖e8 26 f5 is unpleasant.

25 ♖xf2 ♖d6

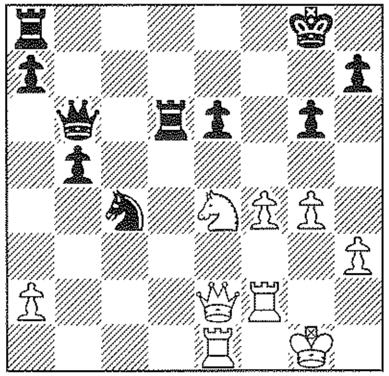
'25...♖c8 was stronger.' (Spassky) 'This did not satisfy Fischer on account of the loss of the central file after 26 ♖d1.' (Bondarevsky) However, the continuation 26...♖ac8 (26...e5 27 f5! ♖ad8 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 f6 is unclear) 27 ♘e4 ♖ed8 28 ♘f6+ ♔g7 29 g5 h6 is more favourable for Black than if White instead plays 26 ♘e4! ♖f8 27 g5 ♖ad8 28 ♘f6+ ♔h8(g7) 29 ♖e1 ♖d6 30 f5!, after which he would have retained tactical counter-chances, as in the game.

26 ♖e1 ♕b6!

Fighting for the initiative. A far more modest alternative was 26...e5 (26...♖d2?! is no use: 27 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 28 ♘xe6) 27 fxe5 ♖e8, holding the draw after 28 exd6!? ♖xe2 29 ♖exe2 ♘xd6 30 ♘e6! h6 31 ♖f8+ ♔h7 32 ♘g5+! ♔g7! (but not 32...hxg5?? 33 ♖e7+ ♔h6 34 ♖h8 mate) 33 ♘e6+ ♔h7.

27 ♘e4!

'This is significantly more cunning than 27 ♘xe6 ♖e8 28 f5 ♖d2 29 ♕f3 ♖xa2 30 ♖f1 with the threat of 31 fxg6.' (Bondarevsky) Especially as after 30...♖xf2 31 ♖xf2 ♕e3! 32 ♕xe3 (32 ♕b7? ♕e1+ 33 ♔g2 ♘e3+) 32...♘xe3 33 ♘c7 (33 ♖f3 ♘c4) 33...♖e5 34 fxg6 a5! Black has every chance of winning.



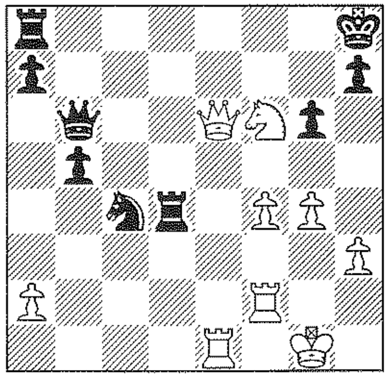
27...♖d4?!

'Unfortunately for Bobby, the type of position that has arisen is one where it is extremely difficult to calculate the consequences of this or that variation. Meanwhile, Fischer requires accuracy and clarity. He has an exceptionally "pure" style of play and in positions that do not lend themselves to concrete analysis he feels unsure. After 27...♖c6 the game would probably have ended in a draw, but Bobby flinched, lost the thread of the game and began playing too nervily.' (Spassky)

'After 27...♖c6 possible are both 28 ♖d1 ♖d8 29 ♖d3 and 28 ♕f3, in order to switch the queen to c3 or h4.' (Bondarevsky) However, Black can exploit the pin on the rook at f2: after 28 ♖d1?! there is the strong response 28...♖f8! 29 g5 (29 ♔h1 ♘e3! 30 ♖e1 ♘d5) 29...♘e3! 30 ♖d7 ♖c2 31 ♕e1 ♕c6 32 ♘f6+ ♖xf6!, while if 28 ♕f3?! then 28...♖d8! with the threat of ...♘d2. And in the event of 28 ♘f6+ ♔h8 29 ♘d7 ♕d4 White has nothing better than to fight for a draw in the double rook endgame a pawn down after 30 ♘e5 (30 ♖d1 ♕e3) 30...♘xe5 31 ♕xe5+ ♕xe5 32 ♖xe5 a6 33 ♖fe2 ♖e8 34 ♔f2.

28 ♘f6+ ♔h8!? (ignoring the drawing possibilities 28...♔g7 29 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 30 ♖xe6 ♖f8! 31 ♘e8+ ♔f7 or 31 g5 a5 32 ♖e7+ ♖f7 33 ♖e8 ♖f8 34 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 35 ♘xh7+ ♔g7 36 ♘f6 b4) **29 ♕xe6!**

It would appear that Fischer had overlooked something.



29...♖d6

Alas, the planned reply 29...♖d1? (if 29...♕xe6?! 30 ♖xe6 ♔g7 White has the unpleasant 31 f5!) would have been refuted by the brilliant stroke 30 ♕f7!! ♖xe1+ 31 ♔g2, for example:

1) 31...♕c6+? 32 ♔g3 ♖e3+ (or 32...♖g1+ 33 ♔h4 ♖xg4+ 34 ♔xg4 ♘e3+ 35 ♔g5 ♕c5+ 36 f5) 33 ♔h2 ♖xh3+ 34 ♔xh3 ♕h1+ 35 ♖h2 ♕f1+ 36 ♔h4 ♕e1+ 37 ♔g5 and wins;

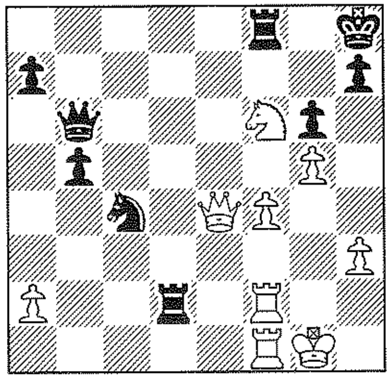
2) 31...♘e3+ 32 ♔f3! (32 ♔g3?? ♘f1+! 33 ♔h4? ♕xf2+ 34 ♔g5 ♖e5+! 35 fxe5 ♕e3+ 36 ♔h4 ♕h6+ 37 ♘h5 g5 mate!, or 33 ♖xf1 ♕e3+ and ...♕e7; instead of 33...♘f1+, 33...♘f5+!? 34 gxf5 ♕e3+ and ...♕e7 also wins) 32...♕c6+ 33 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 34 ♔h4! ♖xg4+! 35 hxg4 ♕h1+ 36 ♔g5 ♘xg4! (not 36...♖c8? 37 ♕d7! ♖b8 38 ♕d4) 37 ♔xg4 ♕g1+ 38 ♔f3 ♕h1+ 39 ♔g3 (or 39 ♔e3 ♖d8 40 ♘g4!) 39...♖d8 (analysis by Vasyukov and Speelman) 40 ♘d7! ♕g1+ 41 ♖g2 ♕e1+ 42 ♔h3 ♕h1+ 43 ♖h2, and White, by nevertheless avoiding perpetual check, wins (Fritz).

30 ♕e4 ♖f8?!

'Through inertia Fischer continued playing for a win and did not sense the moment when his position became worse.' (Korchnoi) It was simpler to play 30...♖ad8! 31 g5 ♖d2 (31...♖d3!?) 32 ♖e2 (32 ♖ef1 ♕e3) 32...♖xe2 33 ♕xe2 ♕e3! 34 ♕xe3 ♖d1+! 35 ♔g2 (35 ♔h2 ♘xe3 36 ♖e2 ♖d2!; 35 ♖f1 ♘xe3) 35...♘xe3+ 36 ♔f3 ♘f5 with equality.

31 g5 ♖d2 32 ♖f1

With the threat of ♕e7! If 32 ♖ee2, then 32...♖xe2 33 ♕xe2 ♕b7 is equal.



32...♕c7?

'An indication that Black is completely rattled. After 32...♘d6 it was still possible to defend.' (Spassky) However, then 33 ♕e5! ♘f7 (33...♕d4 34 ♕e7!) 34 ♕c3 ♖fd8 35 ♘d5+! ♕d4 36 ♕xd2 would have been decisive, whereas after 32...♖xf2?! 33 ♖xf2 ♕e3 34 ♕xe3 ♘xe3 35 ♖d2 Black has a bad ending.

The only chance was 32...♔g7! 33 f5 (another interesting idea is 33 h4!? ♕d4! 34 h5 ♕xe4 35 h6+ ♔h8 36 ♘xe4) 33...♖xf2! 34 ♖xf2 ♕e3 35 ♕h4!? (Bondarevsky) 35...h5! with equality: 36 gxh6+ ♕xh6 37 ♕xh6+ ♔xh6 38 ♘g4+ ♔g5 39 fxg6 ♖d8 40 g7 ♔g6, or 36 fxg6 ♕e1+ 37 ♔g2 (37 ♔h2 ♕e5+) 37...♘e3+ 38 ♔h2 ♘f1+ (*Boris Spassky's 300 Wins*).

The professional observation by Korchnoi is highly interesting: 'In the opening Fischer used to spend quite a lot of time, but then he began playing easily and quickly. Bronstein once said to me that such a manner of playing is very cunning. In the opening it seems to the opponent that he too does not need to hurry and can spend an equal amount of time as his "slow" opponent. But when in the middlegame the latter suddenly begins playing quickly, it can be hard for a player who is unprepared for a such a turn of events to readjust, and he unexpectedly discovers that he is in time-trouble... But with Spassky such "tricks" do not work. Throughout the game the world champion had a greater reserve of time than his opponent. And when Fischer began to experience difficulties, he ended up in time-trouble. However, at that moment his position was already lost.'

33 ♖xd2! ♘xd2 34 ♕d4! ♖d8

Black would also not have saved the game with the more tenacious 34...♕b6 (34...♘xf1? 35 ♘e8+) 35 ♕xb6 axb6 36 ♖d1! (36 ♖c1!?) 36...♖d8 (36...♘c4? 37 ♖d7) 37 ♔g2 ♖d4 38 ♖e1! (Spassky) 38...♔g7 39 ♖e7+ ♔f8 40 ♖b7 ♖xf4 (40...♘c4 41 ♘xh7+ ♔e8 42 ♖g7!, or 41...♔g8 42 ♘f6+ ♔f8 43 ♘d7+ ♔e8 44 ♘e5!) 41 ♘xh7+ ♔e8 42 ♘f6+ ♔f8 43 ♘d7+ ♔e7 44 ♘e5+ ♔d6 45 ♘xg6 ♖a4 46 ♘f8 ♖xa2 47 g6.

35 ♘d5+ ♔g8 36 ♖f2 ♘c4 37 ♖e2! ♖d6 (37...♕b6 38 ♖e8+!; 37...♕d6 38 ♖e7) **38 ♖e8+ ♔f7 39 ♖f8+! 1-0**

In view of 39...♔xf8 40 ♕h8+ ♔f7 41 ♕xh7+. A fight to the death!

'Spassky's spectacular concluding move provoked a storm of delight and for the first time the Siegenlandhall burst into thunderous applause. The first to congratulate the world champion, embracing and kissing him, was the USSR ambassador in West Germany, who was present at the match. In memory of this game the ambassador was presented with the chess set, which had just been the "battle arena" of the two outstanding players. Many of the grandmasters who were in the vicinity autographed the board. Fischer declined to follow their example. He was very upset, although he conducted himself well.' (Taimanov)

'Pale and upset, Fischer stood up from the board, after signing his capitulation. Everyone, absolutely everyone hailed Spassky's victory. Even the Americans themselves were not too upset by the defeat of their leader. "It would not be bad if Bobby were to realise," they said, "that he is not such a genius as he thinks he is..." Spassky himself did not rate this game too highly as regards its chess content: he considered that he had won a war of nerves.' (Korchnoi)

Spassky also had something to say about this: 'As world champion I consider myself obliged to play constantly against the grandmasters who are closest of all to the chess throne. Therefore I had not the slightest hesitation about the advisability of playing Fischer at the Olympiad. This player has good reason to be challenging for the title of world champion, and from the viewpoint of my personal prestige I was obliged to join battle. I myself don't know how I succeeded, but before the game with Fischer I experienced that special fervour, without which high achievements are unthinkable. It is possible that Fischer himself involuntarily assisted this: it is always pleasant for me to play against him. He reacted to his defeat very steadfastly. He shook my hand and for some ten minutes he remained in the tournament hall, although at such moments a player always seeks solitude. Bobby did not discuss the game with me, and I did not offer to do this with him, because I understood his frame of mind.'

The score in the individual meetings of the 10th and 11th world champions became 3-0 (with two draws) in favour of Spassky, who in addition achieved the best result on board 1. And he would have won the 'Oscar' for the third time running, had it not been for Fischer with his run of successes and his phenomenal 18½ out of 23 in the Interzonal tournament in Palma de Mallorca.

It would very much appear that after this Boris Vasilievich rested on his laurels. A quarter of a century later he was to say: 'I was the strongest from 1964 to 1970, but in 1971 Fischer was already stronger.' However, it is also clear that Spassky arrived at the match with Fischer (Reykjavik 1972) in by no means his best form: he had played too rarely in competitions, he did not over-exert himself at training sessions, and the main thing, and this was a severe blow – he had parted with Bondarevsky.

'Forward, Kazimirych!'

When talking about the sources of Spassky's brilliant style of play, one immediately recalls his previous trainer of many years (1952-1960), the Leningrad grandmaster Alexander Kazimirovich Tolush, who was a famous master of attack and an uncommonly cheerful, witty man. After a win he would inform his friends: 'Dracula has been caught.' When his opponent dragged out a hopeless resistance, he would complain: 'The cannon-fodder is resisting.' When the latter resigned, Tolush would proclaim: 'Amen to the pies.' And during a blitz game and when analysing he would encourage himself with the war-cry: 'Forward, Kazimirych!'

This became the motto of more than one generation of players; it was also liked by Paul

Keres, with whom Tolush worked in the late 40s to early 50s. With Spassky himself, a liking for dashing attacks, for an unfettered, lively and liberal 'Tolush-like' style of play was retained practically to the end of his chess career. 'Kazimirych (as Tolush was affectionately called by his friends) revealed to me the magic world of combinations,' Boris Vasilievich recalled. 'This turning-point proved exceptionally interesting and useful for me. Tolush was a reckless, temperamental gambler, a gambler in the best sense of this word. He keenly understood all the psychological nuances of the struggle in chess. And not only in chess. In order to understand Tolush, you had to observe him during a game of poker. There are numerous amusing stories associated with the name of this inexhaustible wise-cracker.'

However, Tolush's manners did not provoke a positive reaction from everyone. For example, Botvinnik did not like him. And this was why: in the 13th USSR Championship (1944) Tolush mated Botvinnik on f7 with the disrespectful words: 'It's ma-ate, Mikhal Moiseich!' From that time 'Tolush' sounded almost like a swear word to the ears of 'Mikhal Moiseich'. I remember, when I crushed Karpov in the fantastic 16th game of our 1986 match, Botvinnik looked at me severely and gave his verdict: 'You played this game in the style of Tolush!' At that time I was not familiar with all the nuances, but I realised from his intonation that there was nothing positive about this evaluation. In fact the game was an excellent one, but Mikhail Moiseevich, on seeing some wild, non-concrete sacrifices, immediately remembered about 'Kazimirych'. Later, in the foreword to my Russian book *Two Matches* (1987), he even thought up an original explanation for my failures in games 17-19: 'This occurred partly because of the 16th game, which Kasparov played extremely recklessly, in the style of Tolush, but gained a pretty win. Apparently after this he decided that he could get away with anything...'

In these words the Master expressed his great dislike of a 'non-serious', 'buffoon-like' style of play. Botvinnik did not acknowledge anything accidental, and he would build the edifice of a chess game with iron methodicalness, stone by stone... Whereas Spassky, by contrast, was associated with the 'Tolush' style, which became evident to me in 1981, during the tournament in Tilburg. Larsen and I were analysing our recently completed game, in which, in a very complicated situation with castling on opposite sides, I preferred a positional continuation and obtained a better endgame, although I missed a win (cf. Volume 4). Boris Vasilievich, who also took part in the analysis, insistently suggested a thrust of the g-pawn on move 13, repeating: 'Here Tolush would have played g4!' Hearing this, Larsen gave Spassky an understanding look and menacingly cried: 'Kaz-im-ir-ych!!' We all burst out laughing. It appeared that the fame of the St Petersburg master had reached the Danish court... However, previously too Soviet grandmasters of the older generation had often heard abroad the painfully familiar 'Vperyod, Kazimirych!'

Of course, on this theme one could select a mass of examples from the early Spassky, like those in the section 'In his element'. But I wanted to emphasise the presence of the 'Tolush origin' throughout the career of the 10th champion, and I have chosen games by him from the truly star-studded 41st USSR Championship (October 1973) and the adjoining match with Robert Byrne (January 1974).

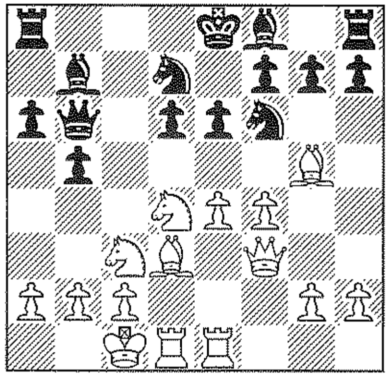
Korchnoi recently said to me that the 1973 USSR Championship was Spassky's swansong, perhaps the best tournament in his career. After all, this was the first Premier League tournament that had attracted all the strongest players of that time. Here there were both the old diehards – Keres, Smyslov, Geller, Taimanov, Petrosian, Korchnoi, Tal and Polugayevsky, as well as the new stars – Karpov, Belyavsky and so on (not long prior to this Korchnoi and Karpov had brilliantly won the Interzonal tournament in Leningrad, and a year later they were to meet in the final Candidates match). But Spassky played better than all of them, simply splendidly! It appeared that he was completely restored after the defeat in his match with Fischer.

His easy, elegant play is most vividly illustrated by two 'related' games – with Vladimir Tukmakov and Naum Rashkovsky, who chose (as it transpired, to their own misfortune) the popular Najdorf Variation in the Sicilian Defence.

Game 80
B.Spassky-V.Tukmakov
41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973
Sicilian Defence B96

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 (at that time the most dangerous move) **6...e6 7 f4 ♘bd7!?** (7...♕b6 – *Game No.41*) **8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 ♗d3 ♗b7 11 ♖he1 ♕b6!?**

One of Polugayevsky's many bold Sicilian ideas, devised in an attempt to overcome the difficulties associated with 11...b4 12 ♘d5!, 11...h6 12 ♕h3!, or 11...♗e7 12 ♕g3! (Spassky-Fischer, 15th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972). The alternative is 11...0-0-0.



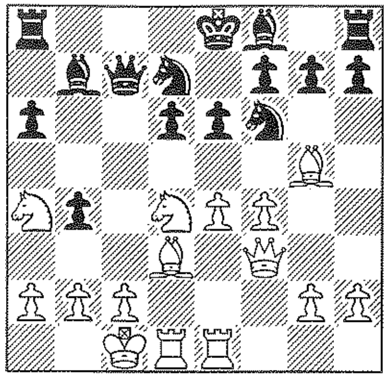
12 ♘b3 (a month earlier, on encountering the new move, Geller played 12 ♘xe6? against Polugayevsky – *Game No.25*) **12...b4**

Not fearing the weakening of his queenside, Black hurries to drive the knight away from the critical d5-square, although 12...♖c8 13 ♔b1 b4 was also possible.

13 ♘a4!? (it is less in the fighting 'Sicilian' spirit to play 13 ♘b1 ♗e7 14 ♘1d2 ♕c7 Ehlvest-Gelfand, Linares 1991) **13...♕c7**

After 13...♕c6?! there could have followed 14 ♘a5! ♕xa4 15 ♘xb7 ♕xa2 (if 15...♖b8, then 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘d5 18 ♗c4!) 16 e5 ♘d5 17 exd6 g6 (17...♘7b6? 18 f5!) 18 ♗c4! ♕xc4 19 ♘a5 ♕a2 20 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 21 ♖xd5 with an advantage.

14 ♘d4



14...♗e7

The attempt to justify the advance of the b-pawn by 14...♕a5?! 15 b3 ♘c5 16 ♘xc5 dxc5? does not work in view of 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♘xe6!! fxe6 19 ♕h5+ ♔e7 20 e5 with a decisive attack. And after 16...♕xc5 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♗c4 0-0-0 (18...f5? 19 ♗xe6!) 19 ♔b1 Black simply has an inferior position.

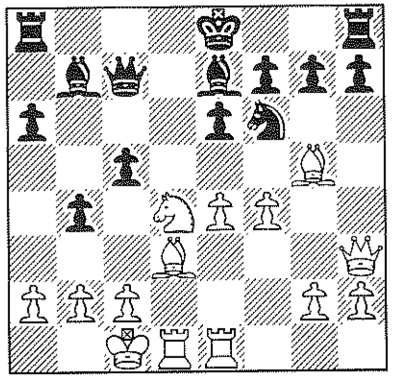
15 ♕h3 ♘c5

Was it worth forcing the opponent to go in for a sacrifice, after which White begins to dictate matters, with practically no risk?

Black loses a piece after 15...0-0? 16 e5 dxe5 17 ♗xf6! ♘xf6 18 fxe5, but 15...0-0-0! (Mecking), is quite acceptable, since if 16 f5 he has a choice between 16...e5 17 ♘f3 h6 (Timman) and 16...♕a5, when after 17 e5?! ♘xe5 18 fxe6? (Kotronias-Kr.Georgiev, Ano Liosia 1995) 18...♘xd3+ 19 ♕xd3 ♕xg5+ 20 ♔b1 fxe6 21 ♘b6+ (21 ♘xe6 ♕a5) 21...♔b8 22 ♘xe6 ♕g6 23 ♕c4 ♖c8 he parries the attack, retaining an advantage.

16 ♘xc5 dxc5

Now White essentially has no choice: after 17 ♘f3? c4 Black seizes the initiative.



17 ♘xe6!

It is probable that Tukmakov glanced at this variation at home and underestimated the knight sacrifice. In fact, it does not lead to a direct deterioration in Black's position and is of a purely positional character. White gains a couple of pawns and a long-term initiative for the piece. Spassky very much liked such sacrifices.

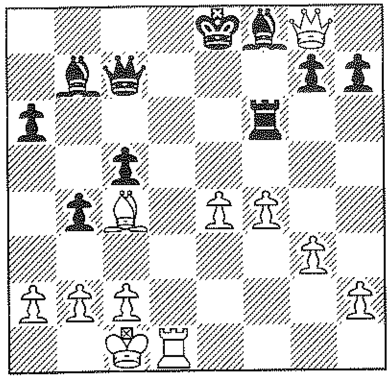
17...fxe6 18 ♗c4!

The crude 18 ♕xe6?! would have been parried by 18...♕c6!, whereas 18 e5?! ♘d5 19 ♕xe6 (19 ♗g6+ hxg6! 20 ♕xh8+ ♔f7 Geller) did not work on account of 19...♕c8!

18...♖d8?

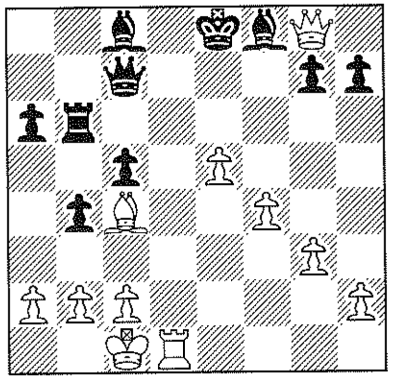
In the Najdorf Variation, approximate play is not good enough. It was essential to play 18...♗c8 19 ♗xe6 ♗xe6! (and not 19...♕c6? 20 e5! ♘g8 21 ♖d6! ♗xe6 22 ♖xe6 or 20...♗xe6 21 exf6! ♗xh3 22 ♖xe7+ ♔f8 23 fxg7+ ♔g8 24 gxh3 h6 25 gxh8♕+ ♔xh8 26 ♗h4 with winning chances) 20 ♕xe6 ♕c8 21 ♕c4 ♖f8, for example: 22 f5 ♖f7 23 ♔b1 ♔f8 24 e5 ♘g8 25 ♗xe7+ ♘xe7 26 g4 ♕c6 and for the moment White's activity does not bring him in any real gains.

19 ♕xe6 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖f8 21 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 22 ♕g8+ ♗f8 (22...♖f8?? 23 ♗f7 mate) **23 g3**



As we can see, the knight sacrifice has fully justified itself. Black's position is already very difficult: he has no way of opposing the opponent's clear plan of a pawn offensive.

23...♗c8 (23...♕e7 24 e5 ♖h6 also loses in view of 25 ♗f7+! ♕xf7 26 ♖d8+! ♔xd8 27 ♕xf7 ♗e7 28 ♕g8+! ♔d7 29 ♕xg7 ♖xh2 30 f5 ♖e2 31 f6 ♖xe5 32 ♕xh7 etc.) **24 e5 ♖b6**



25 ♕xh7

Tal would have been unable to resist the pretty 25 ♖d8+!, which promises success after 25...♔xd8 (25...♕xd8?? 26 ♕f7 mate) 26 ♕xf8+ ♔d7 27 ♕xg7+ ♔d8 (27...♔c6? 28 ♗d5+) 28 ♕g8+ ♔d7 29 ♕xh7+ ♔d8 30 ♕h8+! ♔d7 (30...♔e7 31 f5! ♗xf5 32 ♕g7+ ♔d8 33 ♕f8+) 31 f5! ♕d8 (31...♔c6 32 f6) 32 e6+ ♔c7 33 ♕g7+ ♔d6 34 h4 etc.

Geller suggested 25 e6?! in the expectation of 25...♕e7? 26 ♕f7+ ♕xf7 27 exf7+ ♔e7 28 ♖e1+ ♔f6 29 ♖e8 or 28...♗e6 29 f5 with a technically won endgame. However, after 25...♖d6! 26 ♖e1 ♕e7 27 ♕xh7 ♔d8 nothing resembling a win is apparent (28 ♕f5 ♕f6 29 ♕xc5 ♖xe6 30 ♕a5+ ♖b6).

In the nervy situation just before time-trouble, Spassky preferred calmly to pick up material, assuming that there was no longer any need to calculate variations.

25...♗e6?! (25...♗g4 was better) **26 ♕g6+ ♕f7** (26...♔e7 27 ♗e2 ♗f7 28 ♕g5+ ♔e8 29 ♗g4 and wins) **27 ♕e4 ♕c7 28 h4 ♗xc4 29 ♕xc4 ♕c6 30 b3! g6 31 ♕e2 ♕e6 32 h5 ♖b7?**

This hastens the end, but White's advantage is also obvious after 32...♗e7 33 hxg6 ♕xg6 34 g4.

33 ♕e4! ♖g7 34 hxg6 ♕xg6 35 f5 1-0

If 35...♕h6+ 36 ♔b1 ♖xg3 37 ♕d5!

A few rounds later came the meeting with Rashkovsky. He was reputed to be one of the leading experts on the Najdorf and he chose his favourite variation.

Game 81

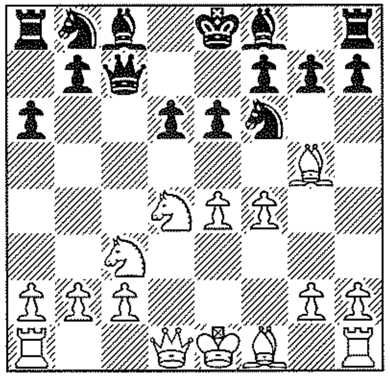
B.Spassky-N.Rashkovsky

41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973

Sicilian Defence B96

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♕c7!?

An interesting idea, which has every right to exist.



8 ♗d3

On encountering an unfamiliar set-up, Spassky initially makes natural developing moves. If 8 ♕e2, then 8...♘c6! 9 0-0-0 ♘xd4! 10 ♖xd4 ♗e7 (Ivanchuk-Kasparov, Tilburg 1989, and Ljubojevic-Kasparov, Belgrade 1989).

Nowadays White fights for an advantage either by the positional 8 ♗xf6 gxf6 9 ♕d2 ♘c6 (9...b5!?) 10 0-0-0 ♗d7 11 ♔b1 h5 12 ♗c4!? (12 ♗e2 ♗e7 Timman-Kasparov, Niksic 1983) 12...0-0-0 13 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 14 ♗b3 ♔b8 15 ♖hf1 ♕c5 16 ♕d3 h4? 17 ♕h3 ♗e7 18 f5 ♕e5 19 ♖de1! ♖de8 20 ♘e2 ♗f8 21 ♘f4 (Topalov-Anand, Dortmund 1997), but 16...♗e7 17 f5 ♖dg8 18 ♕h3 ♖g4! (Leko) is better, or in the mind-boggling complications after 8 ♕f3 b5 9 0-0-0 (or 9 f5 b4 10 ♘cb5 axb5 11 ♗xb5+ ♗d7 12 fxe6 ♗xb5 13 ♘xb5 ♕c5 14 ♗xf6 ♕xb5 15 ♗xg7 etc.) 9...b4 10 e5 ♗b7 11 ♘cb5 axb5 12 ♗xb5+ ♘bd7! (12...♘fd7? 15 ♘xe6!! fxe6 14 ♕h3 ♔f7 15 f5 with a decisive attack, Kr.Georgiev-Kasparov, Malta Olympiad 1980) 13 ♕h3 b3!! 14 ♕xb3 ♗d5 15 c4 ♘e4 etc.

8...♘bd7

Later, when 8...b5! 9 ♕e2 (9 a3 loses a tempo) 9...b4 10 ♘d1 ♘bd7 11 ♘f2 ♗b7! appeared, the number of supporters of 8 ♗d3 dwindled. Generally speaking, driving away the knights from c3 and d4 is one of Black's key ideas in the variations with 6 ♗g5.

9 ♕e2!

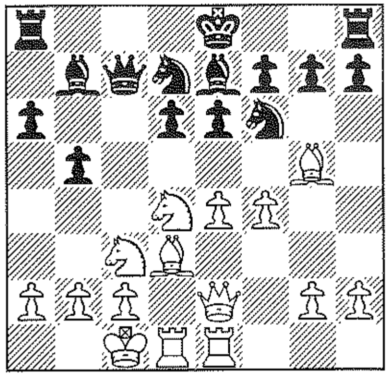
White takes the opportunity to place his queen not on the usual square f3, but at e2, where it no longer shuts in the bishop and helps him to quickly carry out the thematic advance e4-e5.

9...b5?!

It is more solid to play 9...♗e7 10 ♘f3 (or 10 0-0-0 h6 11 ♗h4 b5) 10...h6 11 ♗h4 ♘c5 12 0-0-0 b5 13 e5! dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘d5 15 ♘xd5 exd5 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 and Black is close to equalising (Tal-Balashov, Moscow 1969).

10 0-0-0 ♗b7 (now if 10...b4?! there is the typical sacrifice 11 ♘d5! exd5 12 exd5+ ♗e7

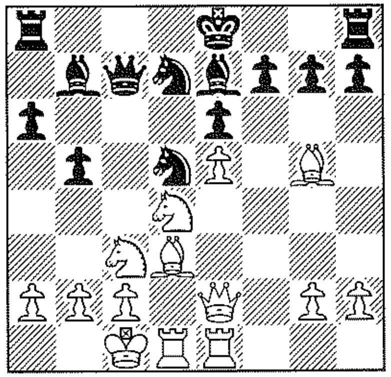
13 ♖he1 with an attack) **11 ♖he1 ♗e7**



Here, according to an eyewitness, Rashkovsky got up from the board with a contented appearance: previously he had achieved good play in a game with Savon after 12 ♔b1 ♘c5! 13 e5 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘d5. But when Boris resolutely advanced his central pawn fifteen minutes later, everyone realised that on this occasion Rashkovsky would not get off lightly!

12 e5! dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘d5

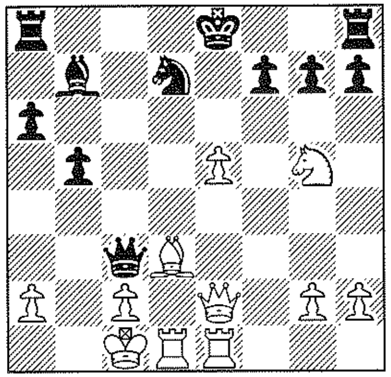
It would appear that now too Black's position is solid enough, although his development is slightly retarded and he has not managed to play his knight to c5. The time has come for a combinative blow! Again hovering over the board is the shadow of 'father Kazimirych'...



14 ♗xe7?!

Immediately after the game Spassky pointed out the stronger 14 ♘xe6! fxe6 15 ♕h5+, and then 15...♔d8 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 18 ♕h4+ g5 (18...♔e8 19 ♗g6+!) 19 ♕xg5+ ♔e8 20 ♕g7 ♖f8 21 ♗xh7 with a powerful attack, or 15...g6 16 ♗xg6+ hxg6 17 ♕xh8+ ♘f8 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 (18...♘xe7?! 19 ♖f1 ♘f5 20 g4 ♕g7 21 ♕xg7 ♘xg7 22 ♖f6 and wins) 19 ♘e4 with a clear advantage.

After 14 ♘xe6! both players also saw the more tenacious 14...♗xg5+! 15 ♘xg5 ♘xc3 16 bxc3! (in *Boris Spassky's 300 Wins* 16 ♕f2 ♘xa2+ 17 ♔b1 with an attack is recommended, but 16...0-0-0! 17 bxc3 ♕xc3 18 ♘xf7 ♖hf8 is better instead, for example: 19 e6 ♘e5!, 19 ♘d6+ ♔b8 20 ♕g3 ♘xe5, 19 ♖e3 ♕a3+ 20 ♔d2 ♘xe5, or 19 ♕f4 ♕a3+ 20 ♔d2 ♗d5! 21 e6 ♕a5+ 22 c3 ♕xa2+ 23 ♔e3 ♖de8 24 ♘d6+ ♔b8!, not fearing the discovered check) 16...♕xc3, when an uncommonly interesting position has arisen.



Analysis diagram

Three continuations are possible – two daring king journeys and a dagger-blow with the queen:

1) 17 ♘xf7 ♕a3+ (17...0-0? 18 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 19 ♕h5+ ♔g8 20 ♘h6+ gxh6 21 ♕g6+ ♔h8 22 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 23 ♕g5+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4+ and ♖xd7) 18 ♔d2 ♕a5+! 19 ♔e3 ♕b6+ 20 ♔f4 0-0! 21 e6 ♕c7+ 22 ♔g4 ♘c5! (22...♕xh2? 23 ♗xh7+! ♕xh7 24 exd7 ♖ad8 25 ♘g5 ♕f5+ 26 ♔h4 ♕f4+ 27 g4) 23 ♘d6 (23 ♕e5 ♕xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♘xe6 with equality) 23...♗c8! 24 ♘xc8 ♕f4+ 25 ♔h3 ♕h6+ with perpetual check;

2) 17 e6!? ♕a3+ 18 ♔d2 ♕a5+ 19 ♔e3! ♕b6+ 20 ♔f4 ♕c7+ 21 ♔g4 ♘f6+ 22 ♔h3 0-0 23 ♘xf7. Here Spassky was cautiously optimistic about this chances, and it would appear that this was not without reason: 23...♖ae8 (23...♕e7? 24 ♕e5) 24 ♘d6 ♗c8 25 ♘xc8! ♕xc8 (25...♖xc8? 26 e7) 26 c4 and the unusual position of White's king should not prevent him from converting his extra pawn;

3) 17 ♕g4! This recommendation of Keres relieves White of any unnecessary anxiety: 17...♕a3+ 18 ♔d2 ♕a5+ 19 ♔e2 h5?! 20 ♕f5 ♗d5 21 e6!, or 17...♘c5 18 ♖e3! ♕a3+ 19 ♔d2! ♕a5+ 20 ♔e2 (threatening e5-e6) 20...♘xd3 21 ♖dxd3 0-0 22 ♘xh7 and wins.

Of course, Spassky studied the sacrifice on e6 first (how many of them did he make in his career!), but he was attracted by another combination – also risky, but even more colourful. And he was simply unable to deny himself the pleasure of performing it on the board... I would wager that in so doing he exclaimed to himself: 'Forward, Kazimirych!'

14...♘xc3

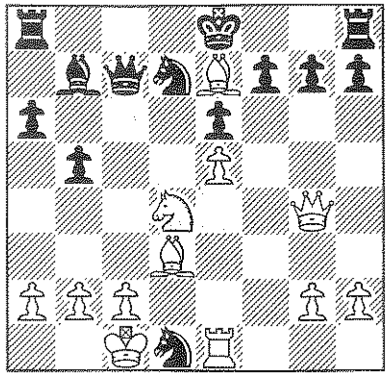
If 14...♘xe7? the simplest way to decide matters is 15 ♗xb5! axb5 16 ♘cxb5 ♕b6 17 ♘d6+ ♔f8 18 ♕f1 ♘f5 19 ♘4xf5 ♖xa2 (19...exf5 20 ♕c4!) 20 ♘c4 etc.

15 ♕g4!

This unexpected and spectacular stroke utterly stunned Rashkovsky, who was expecting only the 'normal' 15 bxc3 ♔xe7 16 ♕g4 ♗d5 17 ♕g5+ ♔f8. White gives up 'half a set' of pieces, sharpening the situation to the utmost, and it is very hard to find the correct defensive course over the board.

15...♘xd1

A later game went 15...♔xe7? 16 ♘xe6! ♘xa2+ 17 ♔b1 ♘c3+ 18 bxc3 ♕xc3 19 ♕g5+ ♔e8 20 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 21 e6 with a crushing attack. Also bad is 15...♘xe5? 16 ♕xg7 ♘xd1 (16...♔xe7? 17 ♘f5+!; 16...♘xd3+ 17 ♖xd3 ♕f4+ 18 ♖de3 ♔xe7 19 ♘xe6!) 17 ♖xe5 ♘f2 18 ♗f5 ♕c4 (or 18...♕xe7 19 ♘xe6!) 19 ♗d6 ♕f1+ 20 ♔d2 ♕d1+ 21 ♔c3 ♖c8+ 22 ♔b3 ♕xd4 23 ♖xe6+!



16 ♘xe6! ♕c6?

The decisive mistake. 16...fxe6 17 ♗d6 ♕b6! was essential, although one could decide on this only after precise calculation and a great belief in one's positional feeling – so alarming is the position of the black king:

1) 18 ♕g5 (Geller's idea: 18...♕d8? 19 ♕g6+!!) 18...♘f6! 19 exf6 ♕xd6! (19...0-0-0?! 20 fxg7 ♖hg8 21 ♗e5! h6 22 ♕f4, regaining the material and retaining the initiative) 20 fxg7 ♖g8 21 ♖xd1 ♕c7 22 ♕h5+ ♔e7 23 ♕h4+ ♔e8 and Black is out of danger, although for the moment White too is not risking anything, since he has a draw (24 ♕h5+);

2) 18 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 19 ♗f5 ♗c6 20 ♕e7+ ♔c8 21 ♕xg7 (21 e6? ♖d8! 22 ♖xd1 ♘f6 23 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 24 ♗c5+ ♔c7 25 ♗xb6+ ♔xb6 favours Black) 21...♖d8 22 ♖xd1 ♕e3+ 23 ♔b1 ♕e2 24 ♖c1 ♕d2 (24...♕xg2? 25 ♕xg2 ♗xg2 is bad on account of 26 e6 ♘f6 27 e7+ ♖d7 28 ♗e5 ♘e8 29 c4) 25 ♕xh7 with a sharp dynamic equilibrium and an unusual material balance (Spassky), for example: 25...♔b7 26 g4 ♖h8 27 ♕e7 ♖ae8 28 ♕f7 ♖d8 29 ♗e7 ♖de8 etc.

Thus it can be ascertained that in this very complicated position, although he did not make the best choice on the 14th move, Spassky nevertheless set his opponent such problems that the latter was unable to cope with them at the board.

17 ♘xg7+! ♔xe7 18 ♕g5+ f6

If 18...♔f8 White finds a convincing set-up: 19 ♘f5! ♕g6 (19...♘c5 20 ♕e7+ ♔g8 21 e6!) 20 ♕e7+ ♔g8 21 ♕xd7 ♕g5+ 22 ♔b1! ♕d2 23 ♖f1! and the curtain comes down.

19 exf6+ ♔d8 20 f7+ ♔c7 21 ♕f4+ 1-0

21...♔b6 22 ♖e6, or 21...♕d6 22 ♘e6+.

A crushing win! And the fact that White's fine combinative attack proved to be not altogether correct, with an element of bluff – this is the best way of remembering Alexander Kazimirovich Tolush.

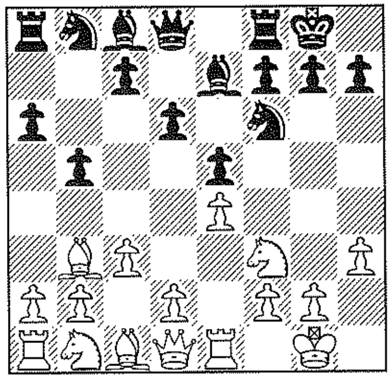
As a result Spassky finished a point ahead of his nearest pursuers and became USSR Champion for the second time. On the wave of this success, a couple of months later he crushed Robert Byrne in their Candidates quarter-final match (+3 =3). The first of these three wins was gained with Black in one of Spassky's favourite set-ups, with the aid of a brilliant queen sacrifice.

Game 82

R.Byrne-B.Spassky

Candidates Match,
San Juan 1974, 3rd game
Ruy Lopez C95

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8

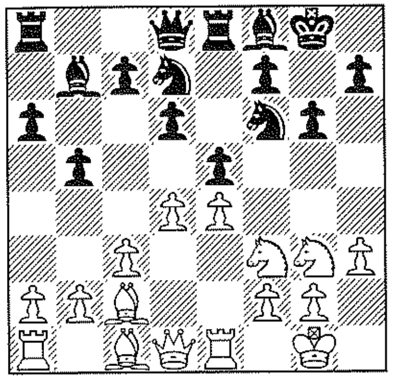


Boris Vasilievich was an expert on the Breyer Variation (and on the Ruy Lopez in general), subtly sensing all the nuances of the resulting positions and achieving success both with Black, and with White. Therefore he did not have great difficulty in refuting Byrne's opening experiment.

10 d4 ♘bd7 11 ♘bd2

It is harmless to play 11 ♘h4 exd4 12 cxd4 ♘b6 13 ♘d2 c5 (R.Byrne-Spassky, Moscow 1971), or 11 c4 c6! (but not 11...♗b7?! – *Volume 2, Game No.96*) 12 cxb5 (12 c5 ♕c7) 12...axb5 13 ♘c3 ♗b7 (13...♗a6!) 14 ♗g5 b4 15 ♘b1 h6 16 ♗h4 c5 (Fischer-Spassky, 29th matchgame, Yugoslavia 1992).

11...♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 ♘f1 (13 b4 Fischer-Spassky, 10th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972 – cf. Volume 4) **13...♗f8 14 ♘g3 g6**



15 b3

Avoiding the thoroughly studied main variation 15 a4 c5 16 d5 c4 17 ♗g5 (if 17 ♗e3, then 17...♘c5!), where Spassky not only experienced difficulties with Black – against Ciocaltea (Dortmund 1973), Kavalek (Montreal 1979) and Tal (Tilburg 1980), but also gained an advantage with White – against Karpov (10th matchgame, Leningrad 1974) and Portisch (9th matchgame, Geneva 1977).

15 ♗d2 has also been played: 15...♗g7 16 ♕c1 d5! with equality (Unzicker-Portisch, Santa Monica 1966, and Balashov-Spassky, Sochi 1973), as well as 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗d2 (Fischer-Spassky, 1st matchgame, Yugoslavia 1992 – cf. Volume 4).

15...♗g7

15...c6 is passive, whereas it is too early for 15...d5?! on account of 16 ♗g5! h6 17 ♗h4 dxe4?! 18 ♘xe4 g5 19 dxe5! with an attack (J.Polgar-Spassky, 8th matchgame, Budapest 1993).

16 a4?!

This move allows the freeing counter ...d6-d5 and therefore never achieved acceptance: White must play more rigorously. However, after 16 d5! (White's main weapon nowadays) 'Kazimirych' suggests 16...♘b6 (16...♖c8 has also been played, Anand-Van der Sterren, Wijk aan Zee 1998) 17 ♗e3?! ♖c8 18 ♕e2 c6! 19 c4 cxd5 20 cxd5 ♘bxd5!? 21 exd5 ♘xd5 with fine compensation for the piece (J.Polgar-Spassky, 10th matchgame, Budapest 1993). The correct move is 17 ♖b1! ('X-ray'!) 17...c6 18 c4 (Unzicker-Donner, Leipzig Olympiad 1960, and Leko-Belyavsky, Bled Olympiad 2002).

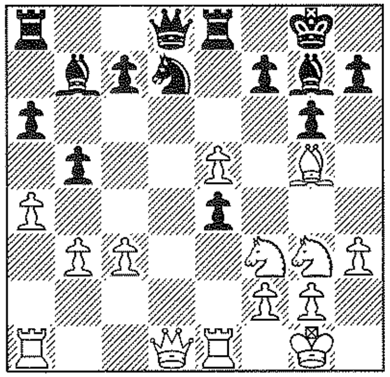
16...d5! 17 dxe5

White gets nowhere with 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 dxe5 ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 dxe4 20 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 21 ♗g5 ♖d5 22 axb5 ♖xb5 23 ♗f6 ♗xf6 24 exf6 ♖f5! (24...♖e6 25 b4 ♖f5 26 f3 is inferior) 25 ♖ad1 ♖xf6 26 ♖d7 ♖c8 with equality.

17...♘xe4 18 ♗xe4

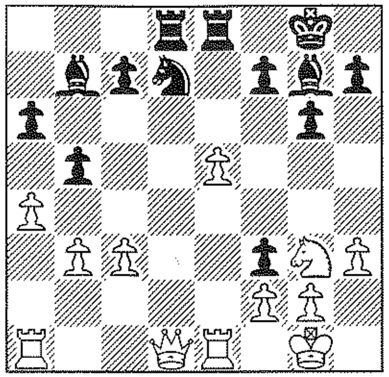
'18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 ♗xe4 could not satisfy Byrne in view of 19...♗xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♘xe5 21 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 22 ♘xe5 ♖d1+ 23 ♔h2 ♖xe5.' (Balashov)

18...dxe4 19 ♗g5



It was this intermediate move that the American grandmaster was counting on. Of course, White can hardly achieve anything serious after 19...f6 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 22 ♘d2 (22 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 23 ♘d4 c5) 22...♕d6 23 ♘df1 with equality, or 19...♕c8 20 ♘xe4 ♘xe5 (but not 20...♗xe4?! 21 ♖xe4 ♘xe5 22 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♕e1 ♕f5 24 ♗f4) 21 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗xf6 ♕f5 24 ♕d4 c5 25 ♕d6 ♕d5 with a probable draw. But Black makes a fearless move, sharply disturbing the quiet course of the game.

19...exf3!? 20 ♗xd8 ♖axd8



Spassky, like Lasker in his time, liked to sacrifice his queen positionally, but a sacrifice of the queen for just two minor pieces is a rare, unusual matter. Few would have bothered to consider it seriously: after all, for the moment White's king is not too weakened and his other pieces are more or less normally placed.

Paradoxically, it is Black, having given up his queen, who is relying on the dynamics of the position – in contrast, say, to the 3rd game of my New York match with Karpov (1990), where I had colossal positional compensation for the queen and, on the contrary, it was my opponent who tried to develop the dynamics. But here Black's compensation is not so obvious, although one can mention the pressure of the bishops along the long diagonals and the potential threat of ...♘d7-e5-f3+. White will have to give up a rook for the knight, after which, perhaps, a position of dynamic balance will arise.

21 axb5?

Byrne clearly underestimated his opponent's threats. White's difficulties are revealed by the variations 21 ♘e4?! ♘xe5 22 ♕c2 fxg2 23 ♖e3 ♘f3+! 24 ♖xf3 (24 ♔xg2 ♖xe4! 25 ♖xe4 f5) 24...♗xe4 25 ♕e2 ♗xf3 26 ♕xf3 b4, and 21 ♖e4?! ♗xe4 (but not 21...♘xe5?! 22 ♖d4!) 22 ♘xe4 ♘xe5 23 ♕c2 fxg2 24 axb5 axb5 25 ♔xg2 ♘d3! with excellent compensation. And in the event of 21 ♘f1 fxg2 22 ♘h2 Black captures on e5 (immediately or after the preliminary 22...bxa4) and has a pleasant game with the draw in hand. In the variation 21 ♕d4 c5 22 ♕e3 ♘xe5 23 ♖ed1 ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 fxg2 the power of the b7-bishop guarantees Black a draw: 25 ♕xc5 ♘f3+ 26 ♔xg2 ♘d2+.

Evidently the best chance was Bondarevsky's recommendation 21 e6! If 21...fxe6?!, then 22 axb5 ♘e5 23 ♕c2 fxg2 (if 23...axb5, then 24 ♖a7! ♖b8 25 ♘e4) 24 ♖xe5! ♗xe5 25 bxa6 is now good for White, and so there only remains the computer variation 21...♘e5 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♕c1 fxg2 24 ♕f4+ ♔g8 25 ♖ed1 (25 ♘e4 ♖f8) 25...♘f3+ 26 ♔xg2 ♘d2+ 27 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 28 ♔f1 ♘h2+ with perpetual check.

21...♘xe5! 22 bxa6?

Panic! Of course, 22 ♕c2 should have been played, although after 22...fxg2 with the threat of ...♘f3+ the initiative is now clearly with Black: 23 ♖xe5 (there is nothing better) 23...♗xe5 24 bxa6 and here I discovered the very strong move 24...♗f3! White's position is rather unpleasant: the bishops are rampant over the entire board and counterplay with the advance of the a-pawn is not dangerous (the a8-square is securely controlled). For example: 25 b4 h5! (with the threat of ...h5-h4) 26 h4 ♗f6 and ...♗xh4 with an intensifying attack.

22...♖xd1 23 ♖exd1 ♗a8 (the power of the passed a-pawn proves to be mythical) **24 gxf3 ♘xf3+ 25 ♔f1 ♗xc3**

The rest is not interesting: Black has a decisive attack plus a material advantage.

26 ♖ac1 ♘d2+ 27 ♔g1 ♗a5 28 b4 ♘f3+ 29 ♔f1 ♘h2+ 30 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 31 ♔f1 ♗b6 32 ♖c2 ♘h2+ 33 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 34 ♔f1 ♔f8 35 ♘e2 ♘h2+ 36 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 37 ♔f1 ♗e4 38 ♖a2 ♘h2+

Boris Vasilievich liked to give checks to gain time on the clock.

39 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 40 ♔f1 ♘h4! 41 ♘f4 ♗f3 42 ♖d3 g5 43 ♘e2 ♗g2+ 44 ♔e1 ♘f3+ 45 ♔d1 ♘e5 46 ♖c3 ♗d5 47 ♖d2 ♗c4 48 ♖a3 ♖a8 49 f4 gxf4 50 ♘xf4 ♖xa6 51 ♖xa6 ♗xa6 52 ♘d5 ♗c4 53 ♘xb6 cxb6 54 ♖d6 b5 55 ♔d2 ♘g6 56 ♔e3 h5 0-1

Three games – three vivid flashes of fantasy. Karpov was right, when he said: 'in Spassky's amateurishness in the opening there was also a danger: at the board he could devise something that you would not find in any book.' Especially when the opponents were inferior in class to Spassky and his play was very bold and relaxed, with a feeling of spiritual comfort.

It was with such a feeling that I played in Wijk aan Zee 2000 (when I was in the middle of working on this chapter about Spassky). Before the final round I was leading my main rivals by a point, and a draw as White with Judit Polgar would guarantee me victory in the tournament. I no longer wanted to play (in addition, the round began unusually early, at 12.30), but, on the other hand, it was somehow uncomfortable to 'rest on my laurels' ahead of time. With these contradictory feelings I played **1 e4**, but after **1...c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6** I woke up: Polgar is playing the Najdorf! I, of course, replied **6 ♗e3**, Judit – **6...♘g4 7 ♗g5 h6 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♗g3 ♗g7**, I – **10 h3!?** (I was already tired of 10 ♗e2 h5), and she, after some thought – **10...♘f6!?** An interesting novelty, although, of course, I had examined this move and considered the normal reply to be 11 ♗e2 with a complicated game. But here I remembered the triumphant call 'Forward, Kazimirych!' and, with a smile, I launched into an open battle: **11 ♗c4!? ♕b6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♘de2!? ♕xb2 14 ♗b3 ♕a3 15 f4!** and after great adventures I nevertheless got to the black king!

...In the spring of 1974 Spassky met the young Anatoly Karpov in the Candidates quarter-final match. Many were predicting a win for the spirited 37-year-old ex-world champion, and the very first game appeared to confirm these forecasts.

Game 83
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 1st game
Sicilian Defence B83

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 e5!?

In this match Spassky also played 9...♗d7 (9th game), whereas 9...a6 leads to a *tabiya* from my matches with Karpov (1984/85, 1985) and Anand (1995) after 10 a4 ♕c7 11 ♔h1 ♖e8.

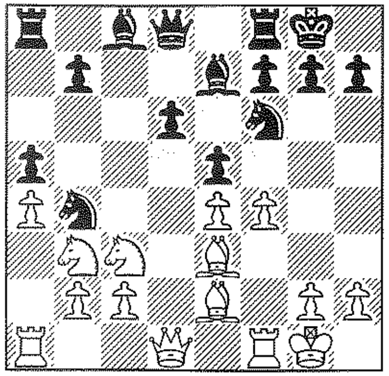
10 ♘b3

It is harmless to play either 10 ♘f5?! ♗xf5 11 exf5 exf4 12 ♖xf4 d5! 13 ♔h1 ♖e8 with equality (Mecking-Spassky, Nice Olympiad 1974), the simplifying 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 or the exotic 10 ♘db5 (Dolmatov) 10...a6 11 fxe5 ♘xe5. The only try for an advantage is in the variation 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 ♘f5 ♗xf5 12 ♖xf5 and if 12...♕a5, then 13 ♕f1 (Geller-Kasparov, Moscow Interzonal 1982); usually Black solves his problems by 12...♕xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 g6.

10...a5?!

Some old preparation by Spassky and Bondarevsky. Subsequently this was replaced by the dynamic 10...exf4 11 ♗xf4 (after 11 ♖xf4, apart from the obvious 11...♗e6, the more creative 11...♘d7 and 11...♘e8 are also possible) 11...♗e6 12 ♔h1 d5! 13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♘xd5 ♘dxe5 15 c4 ♗g5!, as I played against Geller (Moscow 1981) and Kuzmin (49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981).

11 a4 ♘b4



The critical position of this variation.

12 ♗f3?!

12 ♔h1! is more accurate, retaining control of the c4-square: 12...♕c7 (12...♗e6?! 13 f5!; 12...d5!? 13 fxe5 ♘xe4) 13 ♖c1! ♗e6 14 ♘d2! exf4 15 ♘b5 ♕d8 16 ♗xf4... 1-0 (Geller-Spassky, Moscow 1974, and Kavalek-Spassky, Manila Interzonal 1976).

If 12...♗d7, then 13 ♗f3 is now appropriate (transposing into the variation 9...♗d7 10 ♘b3 a5 11 a4 ♘b4 12 ♗f3 e5 13 ♔h1), followed by 13...♖c8 (13...♗c6?! 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♕e2 ♕c7 16 ♕f2 ♘d7 17 ♖ad1... 1-0 Geller-Polugayevsky, Portoroz 1973; 13...♕c7 14 ♖f2 ♖fe8 15 ♖d2 b6 16 ♕g1!; 13...♗e6!? Geller) 14 ♖f2! ♖c4 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♖d2 ♕c7 17 ♕g1! ♗d8 18 ♖ad1... 1-0 (Geller-Reshevsky, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970).

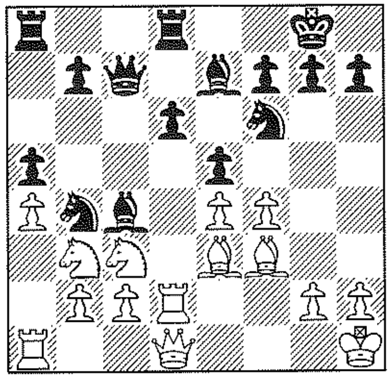
It is this classic example that Karpov tries to follow, but after the inaccuracy committed by White he does not achieve anything and Black obtains a comfortable position.

12...♗e6! (the point: now if 13 f5?! there is 13...♗c4, and in addition 13...exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♘xc2! 15 ♕xc2 ♕b6+ is threatened) **13 ♔h1**

It is hardly impressive to play 13 ♘d2 exf4 14 ♗xf4 ♕b6+ 15 ♔h1 ♖ac8, or 13 ♖f2 exf4 14 ♗xf4 d5 (14...♗xb3!? 15 cxb3 d5) 15 e5 ♘e4 16 ♗xe4 (16 ♘xe4?! dxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗xb3 and ...♗c5!; 16 ♖e2 ♘xc3 17 bxc3

♘c6) 16...dxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♗xb3 18 cxb3 ♘d3 19 ♖f3 ♘xf4 20 ♖xf4 ♕b6+ 21 ♔h1 ♕e6 with equality.

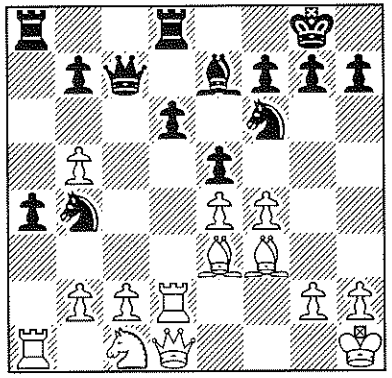
13...♕c7 (13...exf4?! 14 ♗xf4 d5 15 e5!) **14 ♖f2 ♖fd8 15 ♖d2 ♗c4**



16 ♘b5!?

Played after half an hour's thought. One can understand Karpov's motivation: he is unhappy with the outcome of the opening and tries to sharpen the play, by beginning to chase the knight at b4. In the event of 16 ♗e2 d5!? 17 fxe5 ♘xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♗xb3 19 cxb3 dxe4 Black has no reason for complaint, as is also the case after 16 ♕g1 ♘d7 with the threat of ...♘xc2, or 16 ♘d5?! ♘bxd5 17 exd5 e4 18 ♗e2 ♖dc8! (Mikenas).

16...♗xb5 17 axb5 a4 18 ♘c1



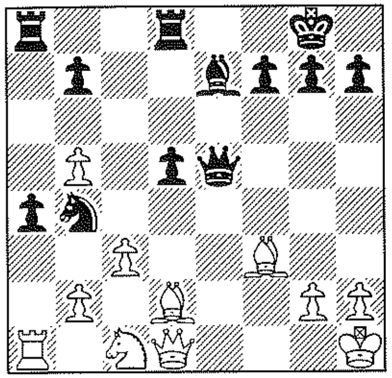
18...d5!

Black is obliged to act energetically. 'Using the classic (for the Sicilian Defence) way of breaking in the centre, Spassky seizes the initiative.' (Botvinnik) But it seems to me that the situation is still completely unclear and that this comment was made, as often happens, under the influence of the result of the game.

19 fxe5 (19 exd5? e4; 19 c3?! dxe4 20 fxe5 ♕xe5) **19...♘xe4 20 c3!**

Consistently carrying out his plan. It was not suitable to play 20 ♗xe4?! dxe4 21 c3 ♖xd2 22 ♗xd2 ♕d7!, or 20 ♖e2?! a3! 21 ♖xa3 (21 c3? axb2 22 ♖xa8 b1♕ and wins) 21...♖xa3 22 bxa3 ♘c3 etc.

20...♘xd2 21 ♗xd2 (21 ♕xd2? d4 22 ♗xd4 ♘c2! 23 ♕xc2 ♖xd4 24 ♗e4 ♖c4 25 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 26 ♗d3 ♕xe5 or 24 b6 ♕c4 25 ♘e2 ♖d7 was much worse) **21...♕xe5!**



22 cxb4

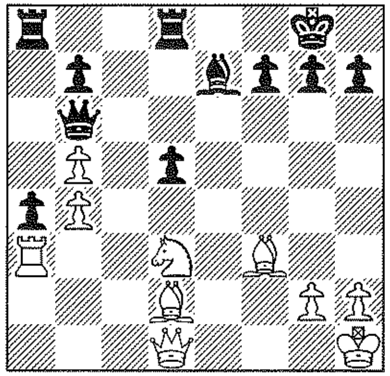
Of course, it was bad to play 22 ♖xa4? ♖xa4 23 ♕xa4 ♗g5! 24 ♕d1 ♖e8 and wins. 'In this sharp position, White could have caused his opponent the maximum difficulties by 22 g3 (suggested by Tal) 22...d4 23 cxb4 ♕xb5 24 ♕e2!' (Botvinnik) In the opinion of Mikenas, after 24...♕d7 25 ♘d3 or 24...♕xe2 25 ♗xe2 with the idea of ♗d3 and ♘e2 he would even have chances of gaining some advantage. However, Black has the improvement 22...♗f6! 23 ♗f4 ♕f5 24 cxb4 g5 25 ♗d2 ♗xb2 and White's position is unenviable.

22...♕xb2 23 ♘d3 ♕d4 24 ♖a3

'Karpov made this move instantly, having apparently overlooked Black's reply in his calculations.' (Mikenas) 'Passively played. A sharper alternative was 24 ♘c5 ♗xc5 (24...a3 25 ♘xb7) 25 bxc5 when White's chances are better than in the game.' (Botvinnik)

And indeed, after 25...♕xc5 26 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 (26...♕xb5 27 ♖b4) 27 ♕xa4 ♕c4! 28 ♕a1!? (after 28 ♕d1 ♕xb5 29 h3, as recommended by Mikenas, 29...d4 is unpleasant) 28...♕xb5 29 ♗e3, or 25...a3 26 ♗g5 (but not 26 c6? bxc6 27 bxc6 a2! 28 ♕c1 ♕xa1 29 ♕xa1 ♖db8 and wins) 26...♕xd1+ 27 ♗xd1 ♖e8 28 ♔g1 the two bishops evidently would have allowed White to hold the position. But also 24 ♖a3 does not yet spoil anything!

24...♕b6!

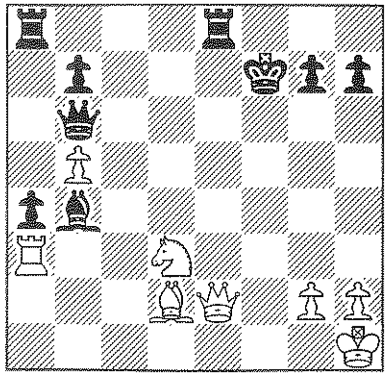


25 ♕e2?!

'All in the same slightly passive style. Here too White should have taken a risk – 25 ♖xa4, not fearing 25...♕xb5 26 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 in view of 27 ♗e2 ♗f6 28 ♘c5 ♕b6 29 ♘b3.' (Botvinnik) However, 27 ♘f4!? d4 (27...♗xb4 28 ♘xd5! ♗xd2? 29 ♘c7) 28 h3 is more interesting, when it is dangerous to play 28...♗xb4 29 ♕b1 ♖a4 30 ♗d5 (30 ♘d3 ♕a6) 30...♕c5?! 31 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 32 ♕b3+ ♔e7 33 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 34 ♘d5+ with a strong initiative. It would appear that 25 ♖xa4! would have retained the dynamic balance and that it was wrong to criticise Karpov's preceding moves.

25...♖e8! (25...♗d6 26 ♗xd5 ♕xb5 27 ♕h5! was inferior) **26 ♗xd5** (26 ♕f2? ♕xf2 27 ♘xf2 ♗g5! 28 ♗c3 d4 and wins) **26...♗xb4 27 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7**

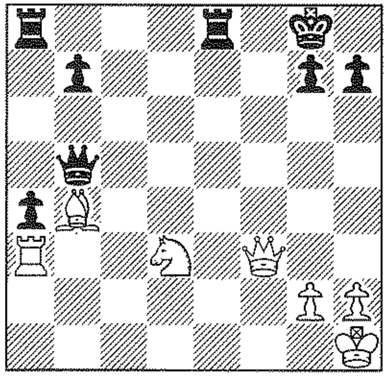
'27...♔h8 28 ♗xe8! (28 ♖xa4? ♗xd2 and wins) 28...♗xa3 29 ♘e5! would have led to unfathomable complications.' (Mikenas)



28 ♕f3+?

Probably only this is a real mistake. In the sharp endgame after 28 ♕h5+! ♕g6 (28...♔g8 29 ♗xb4) 29 ♕f3+ ♕f6 30 ♗xb4! ♕xf3 31 gxf3 White should have been able to gain a draw: 31...b6 (Botvinnik) 32 ♘b2!, 31...♖e3 32 ♗c5! (Mikenas), 31...♖ad8 32 ♗c5 ♖d5 33 ♗g1, or 31...♖e2 32 ♘c5 (32 ♗c5!?) 32...♖d8 33 ♖a1 ♖d4 34 ♗c3 ♖c4 35 ♘xa4.

28...♔g8 29 ♗xb4 (29 ♕d5+ ♕e6! 30 ♕xe6+ ♖xe6 31 ♘xb4? ♖d8 or 31 ♗xb4 ♖b6 etc.) **29...♕xb5**

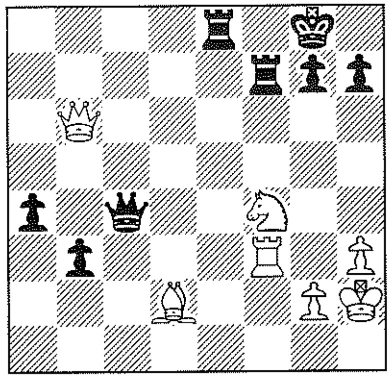


Now Karpov's position is indeed lost: Black has two dangerous passed pawns and active rooks, whereas White's minor pieces have no strong points.

30 h3 ♖ad8 31 ♗d2 ♕d5! 32 ♕f2 b5 33 ♗a5 ♖d7 34 ♘f4 (an attempt to create counterplay) **34...♖f7! 35 ♖f3** (35 ♖g3 ♕c4; 35 ♕g3 ♕d4) **35...♕c4 36 ♗d2 b4 37 ♕b6 b3**

In the opinion of Botvinnik and Mikenas, 37...a3! would have won more quickly. I agree – Black would simply have picked up material: 38 ♕xb4 ♕xb4 39 ♗xb4 a2 40 ♗c3 ♖c8 41 ♗e5 ♖c5 42 ♗b2 ♖b5 43 ♗d4 ♖b4 44 ♗e5 ♖fxf4 and wins.

38 ♔h2



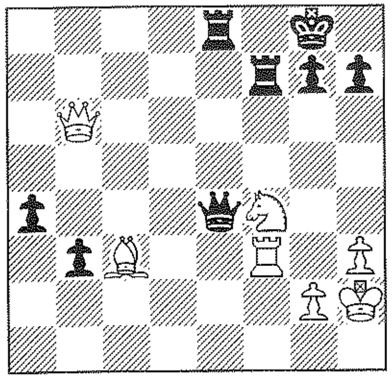
38...♕c2

Here 38...♖ef8!? was recommended (preventing the activation of the white bishop). For example: 39 ♖c3 ♕e4 40 ♖f3 (40 ♘d3 ♖d7!) 40...♕c2 (40...♕b7! is even better) 41 ♕e6! ♕c8! (41...♕xd2? 42 ♘d5!; 41...b2?! 42 ♘d5! ♕c5 43 ♗b4 ♕xb4 44 ♘xb4 b1♕ 45 ♘c6 ♕b7 46 ♘e5 ♕c7 47 ♔h1) 42 ♕e4 ♕b8 – the knight is pinned and the b-pawn cannot be stopped.

39 ♗c3! ♕e4!

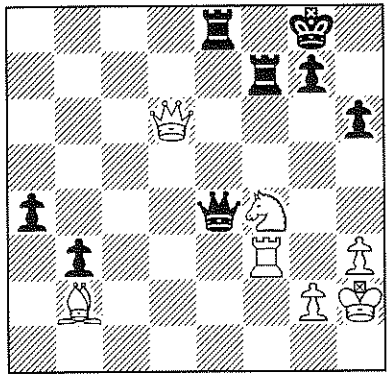
'The threat of ♖g3 has to be parried. After 39...♖xf4? 40 ♕c7 it is White who unexpectedly wins.' (Botvinnik) In fact after 40...♖f6! 41 ♕d7 things would probably have ended in a draw, but 40 ♕b7! would have won.

'39...a3? was dangerous on account of 40 ♖g3 with sufficient counterplay.' (Mikenas) But after 40...b2 it is time for White to resign: 41 ♕b5(c6) ♕e4!, or 41 ♕d4 ♕xc3! The correct defence is 40 ♕b5! ♖ef8 (40...♖c8 41 ♕d5! and ♘d3; 40...♖d8 41 ♕c4!) 41 ♕d5 b2 42 ♗xg7! ♕f5 (42...♔xg7? 43 ♕e5+) 43 ♖g3! ♕xf4 44 ♗xb2+ ♕xg3+ 45 ♔xg3 axb2 46 ♕b3 with equality.



40 ♕d6 h6 (according to Botvinnik, 40...♕e7! was simpler, but certainly not 40...a3? 41 ♕xa3 ♖xf4? 42 ♕a7 and wins) **41 ♗b2**

Karpov has resisted with all his might and Spassky has created some problems for himself – but he has not thrown away the win.



41...♕c2!

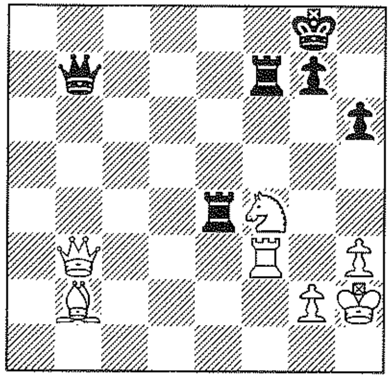
The sealed move. 'Spassky had to avoid some pitfalls: 41...♖ef8? 42 ♖g3!, when White escapes from the pin.' (Botvinnik) The result – 42...♕xf4 43 ♕xf4 ♖xf4 44 ♖xg7+ with perpetual check, or 42...a3 43 ♗xg7! ♖xg7 44 ♘e6 ♖xg3 45 ♕xf8+ ♔h7 46 ♕f7+ with the same outcome.

In addition, after 41...♖c8? White would have saved the game by 42 ♘e6! (but not Botvinnik's 42 ♗xg7?! on account of Mikenas's reply 42...♕c6!) 42...♖xf3 43 ♕d7!, and if 41...♖ee7? then 42 ♘g6! ♖e8 (42...♖e6? 43 ♖xf7! ♔xf7 44 ♕f8+ ♔xg6 45 ♕xg7+ ♔h5 46 g4+; 42...♕e6 43 ♘xe7+) 43 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 44 ♕d7+, forcing 44...♖e7 45 ♘xe7 etc.

42 ♕d5 (42 ♕d4 ♖e4! 43 ♕d8+ ♔h7 44 ♘d3 ♕c7+ or here 43 ♕d5 ♕c4 44 ♕a8+ ♔h7 45 ♖c3 ♕b4 and wins) **42...♕f5**

Avoiding a trap: 42...♕xb2? 43 ♘g6(d3). Despite his time-trouble errors, in general Black confidently converts his advantage, strengthening his position step by step.

43 ♕c6 ♕d7 44 ♕g6 ♖ee7 45 ♕a6 ♕b7! 46 ♕xa4 ♖e4 47 ♕xb3



47...♖b4!

'Spassky prefers to leave White with the weaker piece – the knight.' (Botvinnik) After 47...♕xb3?! 48 ♖xb3 ♖exf4 things would have been more difficult for Black.

48 ♕e6 ♖xb2 49 ♖g3 ♖b6 50 ♕e8+ ♔h7! 51 ♕e3 ♖d6 52 ♕c5 ♕c7 53 ♕b4 ♕d7 54 ♘h5 ♖g6 (54...g6!? Mikenas) **55 ♖xg6 ♔xg6 56 ♘g3 ♕d3 57 h4?! ♔h7 58 h5 ♖d7 59 ♕c5 ♖d4 60 ♕e7 ♖g4 61 ♕e5 ♖h4+ 62 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 63 ♔f2 ♕d4+ 0-1**

However, the ex-world champion was unable to build on his success. 'We must be fair – it was not Spassky's chess talent that suffered a defeat in this match,' wrote Botvinnik. 'Spassky lost the match as a human being. He had favourable opportunities during play, but failed to exploit them. A hard fight is no longer to his liking!' I think that the win with Black in the first game did him a disservice: he anticipated a favourable outcome and did not expect that subsequently his opponent would demonstrate such an extremely high standard of play.

At the end of 1976 Boris Vasilievich married a Frenchwoman, and the Soviet authorities, shocked by Korchnoi's recent defection to the West, made a rare exception and allowed him to go and live with his wife in France. But until 1984 he continued to appear under the USSR flag.

Spassky's Lessons

I first met Spassky at the board in the autumn of 1981 in Tilburg. This was my first top-class tournament – a trial of strength, so to speak. All the strongest grandmasters were there, apart from Karpov and Korchnoi, who were involved in their match in Merano, and also Tal and Polugayevsky (who were helping Karpov). I scored only 50 per cent but, in the opinion of the other participants, I played in a very interesting fashion. Many grandmasters were already able to evaluate my style of play and my potential. Public opinion gradually began to incline towards the fact that there would be a Karpov-Kasparov match in 1984.

Meanwhile, in Tilburg I established a personal tournament record, which, fortunately, I have not yet broken: I lost three games! With Black against Timman I was outplayed, but my defeats with White against Petrosian (*Game No.46*) and Spassky were very painful. In both games I gained the advantage, and in both I had excellent positions, but both ended dismally for me. I had insufficient of that experience, which is usually lacking at the age of 18.

Whereas this was not the first time I had played Petrosian and, already having some experience, I played with a slight caution, I approached my duel with Spassky without the slightest piety. I had 2 out of 4 and I was in a fighting mood: I thought that I could score a lot more points (and, incidentally, not without reason: in all my games right to the end of the tournament I had winning chances). Recently Boris Vasilievich reminded me that before the game I had cheerfully informed him how it would end: I prepared him for the worst, and in my usual, natural manner – even, it seems, using not altogether literary language. To which Spassky, also in his usual – 'Tolush-like' – manner, grandly replied: 'I beg you to carry it out!' And although, as it seemed to me, Boris Vasilievich was terribly afraid, he composed himself for the game.

Game 84

G.Kasparov-B.Spassky

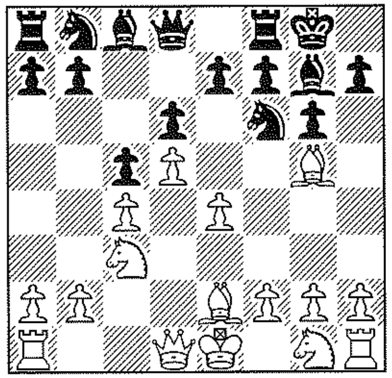
Tilburg 1981, 5th round

King's Indian Defence E74

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 ♘c3 d6 5 e4 ♗g7

Spassky always made subtle choices in his openings. I was somewhat startled that he should take the risk of playing a King's Indian set-up that was very familiar to me. After some thought I decided to choose the Averbakh Variation – perhaps not the most dangerous for Black, but one that demands very energetic play and a detailed knowledge of opening subtleties (which the opponent probably did not have!).

6 ♗e2 0-0 7 ♗g5



Here Spassky hesitated and then decided to sacrifice a pawn in the sprit of the Benko Gambit, hoping to seize the initiative and force White to defend accurately, i.e. to give the play a character that was unpleasant for me.

7...b5?! (7...h6; 7...e6 – cf. Volume 4) **8 cxb5 a6 9 a4! ♕a5?!**

The first subtlety: it is better to continue 9...h6! 10 ♗d2! e6 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♘f3 axb5 13 ♗xb5 ♘a6 14 0-0 ♘c7 15 ♖e1 ♘xb5 16 ♘xb5 d5 17 exd5 ♘xd5 with more or less sufficient compensation for the pawn, as I played two months later against Tukmakov (49th USSR Championship, Frunze 1981).

10 ♗d2! ♘bd7?

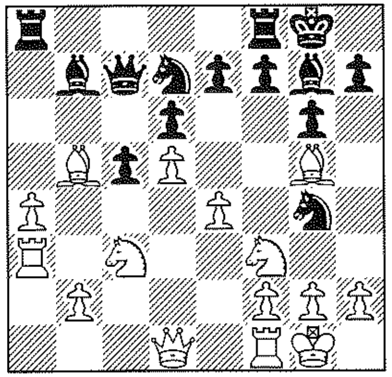
Here play on general grounds is too passive: Black simply ends up in an inferior version of the Benko Gambit, as is also the case after 10...axb5?! 11 ♗xb5. The only chance of confusing matters is 10...♕b4!?

11 ♖a3! (now Black's activity peters out) **11...♗b7 12 ♘f3 axb5 13 ♗xb5 ♕c7 14 0-0**

White's position is already technically won: he is a healthy pawn to the good, without any counterplay for the opponent. Thus Spassky's venture had failed. However, he carried on playing as though nothing had happened, with a completely unperturbed appearance (which, I remember, made me laugh somewhat).

14...♘g4 (it is completely hopeless to play 14...e6? 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 ♘g5 ♖ae8 17 ♗f4 e5 18 ♗c4+ ♔h8 19 ♘b5 ♕b8 20 ♘xd6 and wins) **15 ♗g5**

It is hard not to make this move, although the computer suggests 15 a5.



15...♘gf6

A pragmatic decision by an experienced contestant! Black must hold his ground, be patient and wait – the opponent may overpress, or make a second-rate move... The variation 15...♘de5 (or 15...♘ge5) 16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 17 f4 ♘d7 18 ♗xe7 ♖fe8 19 ♗g5 h6 (19...♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♖xe4 21 c4 and wins) 20 ♗h4 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♖xe4 22 c4 would have led to a decisive advantage for White.

16 ♘d2 e6 17 ♘c4

Also after 17 dxe6!? fxe6 18 ♘c4 d5 19 exd5 ♘xd5 (19...exd5 20 ♗xd7 dxc4 21 ♗e6+) 20 a5 Black's position would have left much to be desired.

17...exd5 18 exd5 ♖ad8 (18...♘b6? does not work on account of 19 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 20 ♕f3! ♘h5 21 g4 and wins) **19 a5**

An obvious plan for converting the advantage. To this day I don't understand how I contrived to lose from such a position!

19...h6 20 ♗h4

It is possible that 20 ♗f4!? was better, and if 20...♘e5 then either 21 ♗xe5 dxe5 22 d6 ♕b8 23 a6 ♗a8 24 ♖e1 e4 25 ♕a4, or 21 ♘xe5 dxe5 22 d6! ♕xd6 23 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 24 ♗xe5 ♖d2 25 a6 ♗a8 26 ♘a4, with a winning position in both cases. The move in the game does not spoil anything for the moment, but Black acquires a hint of counterplay.

20...♘e5 21 a6 ♗a8 22 ♖e1 g5 23 ♗g3 ♘fd7! (opening the way for the f-pawn) **24 a7! f5 25 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♘xe5 dxe5!**

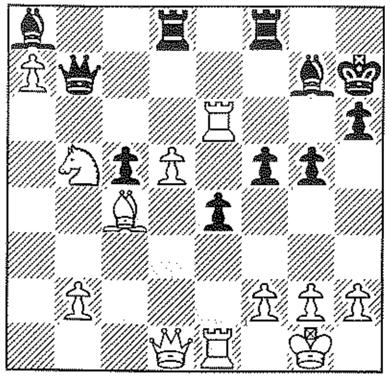
The only way. After 26...♗xe5 27 ♕h5 ♔g7 28 ♖a6! ♗xc3 (28...♗b7? 29 ♖xe5! ♗xa6 30 ♖e6) 29 bxc3 ♗xd5 30 c4 ♗f7 31 ♕f3 ♖a8 32 ♖ea1 White would have won without any trouble. Now too the a7-pawn should decide the outcome, but at least it is blockaded and Black still has hopes of exploiting the power of his dark-squared bishop.

27 ♖a6 e4 28 ♗c4 (the machine suggests the 'crude' 28 d6!? ♕f7 29 ♕e2) **28...♕f7** (28...♕f4 29 ♕e2 ♗e5? 30 g3 is weak) **29 ♘b5 ♔h7** (29...♗xd5? 30 a8♕ ♖xa8 31 ♗xd5 etc.) **30 ♖e6**

The situation had crystallised and I began playing quite enterprisingly: the knight has defended the a7-pawn and the rook has invaded at e6. The finishing-off stage has been reached and Spassky was already in severe time-trouble (perhaps this was my undoing?).

30...♕b7!

Black is not tempted by 30...♕xe6? 31 dxe6 ♖xd1 32 ♖xd1 ♗e5 33 e7 ♖e8 34 ♖d8.



31 ♕h5?!

The first move that deserves serious criticism. I should have simply attacked the e4-pawn by 31 f3!, and the game would have concluded quickly, for example: 31...♖xd5?! 32 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 33 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 34 ♖d6 ♗a8 35 fxe4 fxe4 36 ♖f1! I am amazed that I did not play this. Commentary is superfluous here...

31...♖f6 32 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 33 g4?

Whereas the queen sortie to h5 was not so bad, here (in the opponent's time-trouble!) I simply 'twitched'. There was an elementary win by 33 f3! ♕d7 34 fxe4 fxe4 35 ♖f1 ♕g7 36 ♕g4.

33...f4!

An instant reply! Black has acquired real counter-chances for the first time.

34 h4!?

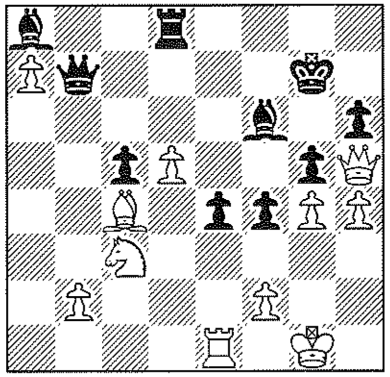
With the opponent in time-trouble, this 'side' move is not a bad chance in the unexpectedly sharpened situation. The hasty 34 ♖xe4? would have led only to a draw: 34...♖xd5 35 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 (the queen and bishop battery goes into operation against the exposed white king) 36 f3 ♕d1+ 37 ♔f2 ♗xe4 38 ♕f7+ ♗g7 39 fxe4 ♕d2+ with perpetual check. But how could White reconcile himself to such an outcome?!

34...♔g7?

With the flag about to fall! 34...e3! 35 hxg5 ♗xg5 36 ♕h1 ♕e7 would have led to a sharp, totally unclear position. True, 35 fxe3 ♖xd5 36 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 37 e4 ♕d3 38 ♕f7+ ♗g7 39 ♕f5+ ♔h8 would still have forced a draw.

35 ♘c3?

Again missing a straightforward win: 35 d6! e3 36 f3! (this is only apparently dangerous) 36...♖c8 (or 36...♖f8 37 ♘c7! ♕xf3 38 ♘e6+) 37 ♘c7 ♖xc7 38 dxc7 ♕xc7 39 ♕e8.



35...e3!

This leads to an abrupt sharpening of the play. For some reason I had only reckoned on 35...♕xa7? 36 ♘xe4 ♕e7 37 ♔f1 ♗xd5 38 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 39 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 40 ♕e8, winning.

36 ♗d3 exf2+ 37 ♔xf2 ♕xb2+ 38 ♖e2?

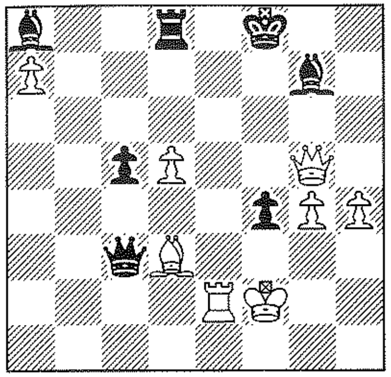
A blunder – now in my own time-trouble. Indeed, White gives up his knight for just a couple of checks! After the only correct move 38 ♘e2, strangely enough, he would still have retained the advantage:

1) 38...♗xd5?! 39 ♕g6+ ♔f8 40 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 41 ♔f1 ♔d7 42 hxg5 ♗g7 43 ♕g6 and wins;

2) 38...♖xd5?! 39 ♕g6+ ♔f8 40 ♗c4 ♗d4+ (40...f3 41 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 42 ♕f5 ♕e5 43 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 44 ♖d1 ♗c6 45 ♖d8+ ♔e7 46 ♖c8 ♗b7 47 hxg5 hxg5 48 ♖xc5) 41 ♔f1 f3 42 ♗xd5 fxe2+ 43 ♖xe2 ♕c1+ 44 ♖e1 ♕f4+ 45 ♔e2 ♗xd5 46 a8♕+! ♗xa8 47 ♖f1 and wins;

3) 38...♗d4+! 39 ♔f1 f3 40 ♕g6+ ♔f8 41 ♕f5+ ♔g7 42 ♕xf3 ♖f8 (42...♗xd5? 43 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 44 a8♕ and wins) 43 ♗f5, and although Black is clearly worse, he can still fight on.

38...♕xc3 39 ♕g6+ ♔f8 40 ♕xh6+ ♗g7 41 ♕xg5



41...♕f6?

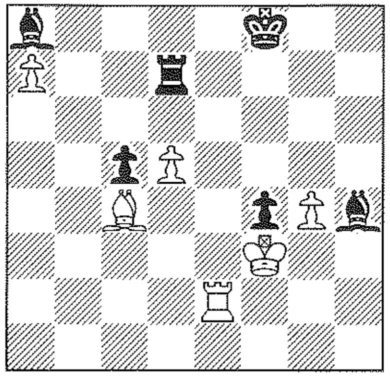
Had Spassky known that the time control had already been reached, he would have stopped to think – and could have won immediately: 41...♕d4+! (driving away the king from f2) 42 ♔f1 ♕f6! 43 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 44 g5 ♗d4 45 ♗c4 f3! 46 ♖a2 ♖e8 47 ♖a3 f2 48 ♔g2 ♖e1 49 ♖f3+ ♔e7 50 ♖f5 ♖c1 51 ♗e2 ♖g1+ 52 ♔h3 ♖a1. As it was, the game was adjourned in a position where the limited amount of material left White with good drawing chances.

The game was resumed the same day, two hours later. The sharp change of scene (instead of a win, I urgently had to find a way to draw!) had a dispiriting effect on me and I squandered all my chances...

42 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 43 ♗c4

I thought that I needed to retain the d5-pawn. Both in my brief analysis, and at the board, I did not see what was probably the most accurate continuation: 43 g5!? ♗d4+ 44 ♔f3 ♗xd5+ 45 ♗e4 ♗xe4+ 46 ♔xe4 ♗e3 47 ♖a2 ♖a8 48 ♖a4 c4 49 ♖xc4 ♖xa7 50 ♔f3 ♔g7 51 ♖c6! (pointed out by Spassky). This would ultimately have led to the endgame with rook and bishop against rook, which, I hope, I would have held, despite my depressed state.

43...♗xh4+ 44 ♔f3 ♖d7



45 ♖a2?

Another, this time irreparable mistake. 45 ♖h2! ♗f6 46 g5! was essential, creating the greatest difficulties for Black, for example: 46...♗e5 47 ♔e4 ♖e7?! 48 ♔f5 f3 49 d6! ♗xh2 50 dxe7+ ♔xe7 51 g6 f2 52 g7 f1♕+ 53 ♗xf1 ♔f7 54 ♗d3 c4 55 ♗e4 ♗g1 with a draw, or 46...♗g7 47 ♖a2 ♗e5 48 ♔e4 ♗c7 49 ♖b2 ♖d8 50 ♔f3 and it is not apparent how Black can win (White simply plays ♔g4 or ♖b3 etc.).

45...♗g5 (now White is unable to play g4-g5 and his position is lost) **46 ♔e4 ♖f7! 47 ♖a5 ♔g7!**

An important moment. 47...f3? was incorrect an account of 48 ♖xc5 ♖f4+ 49 ♔e5 ♖xc4 50 ♖xc4 f2 51 ♖c8+ ♔g7 52 ♖xa8 f1♕ 53 ♖g8+ ♔xg8 54 a8♕+ with a draw.

48 ♖xc5 ♔f6?! (48...♖xa7 49 ♔f5 ♗e7 50 ♖c8 f3 would have been immediately decisive, but even so a piece is a piece!) **49 ♖c8** (or 49 ♖a5 ♖e7+ 50 ♔d4 ♗h4 51 ♖a2 ♔g5)

49...♖xa7

It is all over and, after a desperate resistance, White loses:

50 ♖f8+ ♔g7 51 ♖c8 ♔f6?! (the second time-trouble) **52 ♖f8+ ♔g7** (52...♔e7? 53 ♖f5) **53 ♖c8 ♗b7! 54 ♖c7+ ♔f6 55 ♔d4 ♗h4! 56 d6 ♗f2+ 57 ♔c3 ♗e4!** (57...♔e5? 58 d7 ♗h4 59 g5! with a draw) **58 ♖e7**

Both 58 g5+ ♔xg5 59 d7 ♖a8 60 ♖c8 ♗b6 and 58 ♗b5 ♔e6 59 ♖c4 ♗e1+! 60 ♔b2 ♗d3 61 ♖c7 ♗xb5! 62 ♖xa7 ♗g3 or 62...♗d7 are bad.

58...♖xe7 59 g5+ ♔g6 60 dxe7 ♗c6 61 ♔b4 ♗b6 62 ♗b3 (things are not changed by 62 ♗b5 ♗xb5 63 ♔xb5 ♔f7!) **62...♗d7** (avoiding the last trap: 62...f3? 63 ♗d5 with a draw) **63 ♗d5 ♗e8 64 ♗c4 f3 65 ♗d3+ ♔xg5 66 ♗b5 f2 0-1**

The enterprising and calm way in which Spassky fought on in a hopeless position created a great impression on me. Despite some time-trouble errors, he splendidly exploited the resulting tactical chances and subtly sensed the psychological nuances of the struggle. He outplayed me, in particular, psychologically. In such an ugly position another player would simply have lost heart, but Spassky fought to the bitter end under the motto: 'He is young and hot-tempered – this may tell somewhere!' And that is what happened.

In Bugojno (1982) Boris Vasilievich and I had an ultra-fighting draw, and then our paths crossed again in Niksic (1983). I was then in 'super-human' form (my thorough preparation for the match with Korchnoi was telling) and from the outset I crushed one opponent after another. My 2nd round game with Petrosian, where for a long time I held the initiative, was adjourned in an unclear ending, where we each had a rook, bishop, knight and three pawns. It was due to be resumed immediately after dinner. Holding a sceptical assessment of my winning chances, I decided not to spend much time on analysis and went down to the restaurant. Sitting there were nearly all the tournament participants and, as usual, they were discussing the games that had just been played. Spassky asked me about my adjournment: 'Well, what do you think?' I replied: 'I appear to have thrown away my advantage.' But he suddenly said: 'No, it's not so simple!

The bishops are of opposite colours, and this is in favour of White: he can create an attack. You have a look! Petrosian hasn't come down for dinner – that means he doesn't like his position.' And I looked at the adjourned position with different eyes! The resumption lasted only nine moves: Petrosian avoided passive defence, 'flinched' and came under an irresistible attack. Yes, it is probable that Spassky knew the habits of his historic opponent better than anyone in the world...

Our own game came when I had 6½ out of 7. Of course, I was burning with the desire to continue my winning run.

Game 85

G.Kasparov-B.Spassky

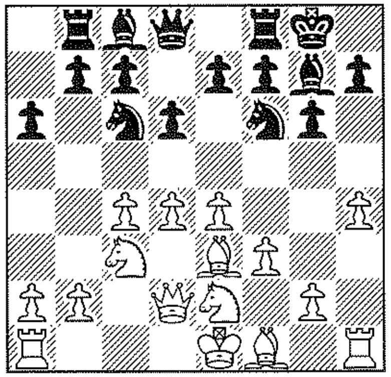
Niksic 1983, 8th round

King's Indian Defence E84

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7

Again a King's Indian – this is a challenge! Well, such a turn of events suited me and I decided to choose the Sämisch Variation, which I had looked at around that time at my training sessions with Timoshchenko (albeit, from the black side).

4 e4 d6 5 f3 ♘c6 6 ♗e3 a6 7 ♘ge2 ♖b8 8 ♕d2 (8 h4!?) **8...0-0** (8...b5!?) **9 h4**



9...b5

After 9...h5 Spassky himself successfully played both 10 0-0-0 against Keene (Dortmund 1973) and 10 ♗h6 against Fischer (8th matchgame, Yugoslavia 1992).

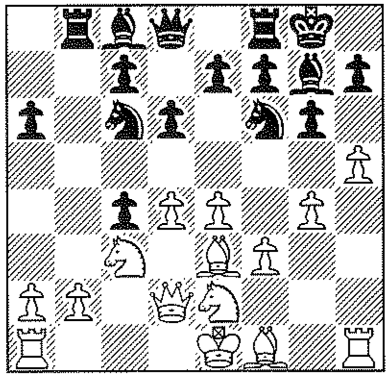
10 h5 bxc4?!

Objectively a second-rate move, but Spassky deliberately wanted to avoid the stronger 10...e5 (but not 10...♘xh5? 11 g4 ♘f6 12 ♗h6 with an attack) 11 d5 ♘a5. In the well-known game Timman-Kasparov (Bugojno 1982) White gained an overwhelming advantage here after 12 ♘g3 bxc4?! 13 0-0-0 ♘d7? 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♘b1! Instead, 13...♖b4 is obviously stronger, although against Loginov (Manila Olympiad 1992) I was able to demonstrate the pluses of White's position: 14 ♗h6 ♗xh6 15 ♕xh6 ♕e7 16 ♗e2 ♗d7 17 ♘f1 ♖fb8 18 ♖d2 c5 19 ♗d1 ♘e8 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 g4 etc.

11 g4!

The most energetic and useful move. The knight at e2, in expectation of ...e7-e5, for the moment guards the d4-square. But now White is threatening 12 hxg6 fxg6 13 ♘f4 and ♕h2! The immediate 11 hxg6 fxg6 12 ♘f4 is not so dangerous after 12...e6 13 ♗xc4 d5 14 ♗b3 ♖xb3! 15 axb3 dxe4 16 0-0-0 exf3 17 gxf3 ♘e7! 18 ♘d3 ♘f5 19 ♘e5 ♗b7 20 ♗g5 ♕e8 with good counterplay (Weih-Spassky, Germany 1983).

Here Boris Vasilievich sank into thought...



11...♗xg4!?

Having seen that in the event of 11...e5 12 d5 followed by ♘g3 and 0-0-0 Black would be deprived of any counterplay (the g-pawn has advanced to g4!), Spassky realised that he had do to something quickly, since otherwise he might be simply suffocated and quickly mated. And he took a decision which, from the purely chess aspect, is perhaps dubious (it is clear that the piece sacrifice is not fully correct), but from the practical, psychological viewpoint it is the best, since it sharply changes the character of the play. White will no longer have a direct attack, and he has to readjust to the conversion of a material advantage, while Black acquires some counterplay.

12 fxg4 ♘xg4 13 0-0-0!

I think that Spassky had underestimated this reply and was reckoning on 13 hxg6? ♘xe3! 14 ♕xe3 ♖xb2! 15 gxf7+ ♖xf7 16 ♕h3 h6 17 0-0-0 ♕b8! with a dangerous counterattack. White does not allow the rook to go to b2 and Black begins to have difficulties.

13...♘xe3

It is also insufficient to play 13...e5, when instead of 14 d5 ♘d4 15 ♘g1 ♘xe3 16 ♕xe3 c5! 17 ♗xc4 (17 dxc6? ♕b6) 17...♖b4 18 b3 ♕a5, when Black is still alive, White should continue 14 hxg6! fxg6 15 ♗h3 ♘xe3 16 ♗e6+! ♔h8 17 ♕xe3 ♗f6 18 ♕h3 h5 19 d5 with an obvious advantage.

14 ♕xe3 e6?!

A characteristic moment! After 14...e5! 15 d5 (15 hxg6 fxg6) 15...♘d4 16 ♘xd4! exd4 17 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♕xd4 Black's position is not easy, but he has some counter-chances. Spassky, however, chose a move which, though perhaps objectively indifferent, maintains the tension and does not allow me a clear line of play: as if to say, go on, attack, and let's see what happens...

15 hxg6 hxg6

Forced, since after 15...fxg6? 16 ♕h3! Black is quickly crushed: 16...♕g5+ (16...♕f6 17 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 18 ♗g2! ♖h8 19 ♖df1 ♖xh7 20 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 21 ♖xh7+) 17 ♔b1 ♖xb2+?! 18 ♔xb2 ♖b8+ 19 ♔a1 ♘b4 20 ♕xe6+ (but not 20 a3? ♘c2+ 21 ♔a2 ♕a5 22 ♘d5 exd5 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 24 ♖h3 dxe4 25 ♗g2 ♘b4+ 26 ♔a1 ♘c2+ with a draw) 20...♔h8 21 a4! ♘c2+ 22 ♔a2 ♘b4+ 23 ♔b1 ♘c6+ 24 ♔a1 ♘xd4 25 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 26 ♕xc4. In taking with the h-pawn, Black hopes that his g7-bishop will defend him against mate – as in the 'Dragon'!

16 ♖d2? (it was necessary to begin with 16 ♘g1! and ♘f3) **16...♖e8?**

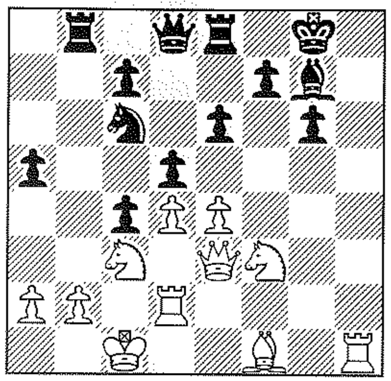
Missing a chance opportunity: 16...♕f6! 17 ♔b1 (17 ♗g2 ♘b4) 17...♖fd8 with not bad counterplay at all. It is interesting that Spassky replied quickly. Now it all reverts to the previous situation.

17 ♘g1! d5 (after 17...e5?! 18 d5 the g7-bishop is idle) **18 ♘f3**

It is evident that White has succeeded in unravelling his pieces, and that Black has lost the initiative. Now the manoeuvre ♖dh2 will be decisive: White has sufficient force to mate the enemy king.

18...a5

Because everything else is hopeless. But here something incredible occurs.



19 e5?

Thinking that I could win as I pleased, I did not even bother to calculate 19 ♖dh2! e5 (19...dxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘xd4 is refuted by 21 ♖h8+! ♗xh8 22 ♖xh8+ ♔xh8 23 ♕h6+ ♔g8 24 ♘fg5). And it was only later, in a conversation during a communal evening walk, that it suddenly dawned on me: stop, 20 ♖h7! can be played. And indeed, after 20...exd4 21 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22 ♕h6+ ♔f6 23 ♘xd5+ ♔e6 24 ♘g5+ White's attack is irresistible.

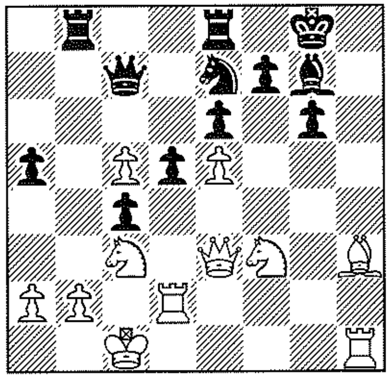
I became terribly upset – I remember that Milunka Lazarevic said to me: 'You're just like

Fischer: after a game he also used to fret!' But how couldn't I be upset?! To miss such a simple win! It is staggering that I did not calculate this variation at the board... The Tilburg story repeated itself and the diagnosis became obvious: I failed to play with sufficient accuracy in winning positions.

19...♘e7! (it transpires that Black has some counterplay: ...c7-c5 and ...♘f5) **20 ♗h3?**

It was far more important to prevent ...c7-c5: 20 ♘a4! ♘f5 21 ♕f4, still with a considerable advantage.

20...c5! 21 dxc5 ♕c7



The situation has become much sharper. White's centre has been demolished and it is not easy to him to create an attack.

22 ♕f4 ♘c6!

Another strong move. The 'base' pawn at e5 is under attack! Black would have lost ignominiously after 22...♕xc5? 23 ♕xf7+!! ♔xf7 24 ♘g5+ ♔f8 (24...♔g8 25 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 26 ♘h7 mate) 25 ♘xe6+ ♔g8 26 ♘xc5, whereas now the situation is completely unclear.

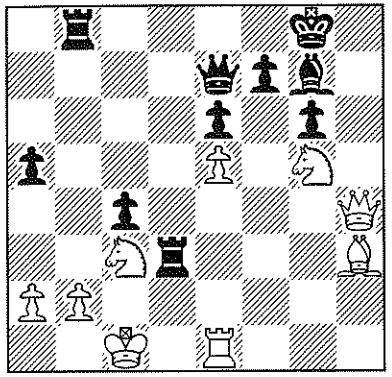
23 ♖e1 d4! 24 ♖xd4! (forced, alas: 24 ♘xd4? ♘xe5!) **24...♘xd4 25 ♘xd4!**

This is still correct, since 25 ♕xd4? ♕b7! 26 ♕f2 ♗h6+ 27 ♔b1 ♖ed8! 28 c6! (White loses after 28 ♘a4? ♕b4 29 ♘b6 c3 30 b3 ♗d2) 28...♕xc6 is advantageous to Black.

25...♕xc5 26 ♘f3 ♖ed8 (26...♕b6!? 27 ♖e2 ♖ed8 28 ♗g4 is also interesting) **27 ♘g5! ♕e7?**

The start of a wild time scramble. After 27...♖d7! White would have been unable to win even with the best move 28 ♗xe6! (but not 28 ♘xe6? ♕b6 29 ♘a4 ♕b4 30 ♖f1 ♕xa4 31 ♘xg7 ♕xa2 32 ♗xd7 ♕xb2+ 33 ♔d1 ♕b1+) 28...fxe6 29 ♕h2 ♗h8 30 ♕h6. The variations are complicated, but it would appear that there is a draw after both 30...♕f2 (only not 30...♖b6? 31 ♘ge4! ♕xe5 32 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 33 ♖f1+ ♔e7 34 ♖f7+ ♔d8 35 ♖f8+ ♔c7 36 ♕e8 and wins) 31 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 32 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 33 ♖e2 ♕f1+ 34 ♔c2 ♕a1 35 ♕h7+ ♔xe6 36 ♕h6+ ♔e7 37 ♕h4+ ♔e6, and 30...♕c6!? 31 ♕xg6+ ♖g7 32 ♕h6 ♖gb7 (33 ♖g1? ♕b6!).

28 ♕h4! ♖d3



29 ♕h7+?

'Sad, sad...' Boleslavsky used to say in such situations. Of course, 29 ♘ce4! was correct with a relatively straightforward win in the event of 29...c3? 30 ♖f1! cxb2+ (30...♕b4 31 ♘f6+ ♔f8 32 ♘gh7+ ♔e7 33 ♘d5+) 31 ♔b1 ♖b6 32 ♕h7+ ♔f8 33 ♘xf7!, or 29...♗xe5 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♖f1 ♗xb2+? 32 ♔c2 f5 33 ♕xg6 ♗g7 (33...♗a3 34 ♘xe6+ ♕xe6 35 ♖xf5+! ♔e7 36 ♕g5+ ♔e8 37 ♖b5!! ♕xe4 38 ♖e5+) 34 ♘xe6+ ♔g8 35 ♘xg7 ♕xg7 36 ♘f6+ ♔f8 37 ♕xf5. Instead of 31...♗xb2+ it would not have been easy for Black to find 31...♖c3+!! 32 bxc3 ♕a3+ 33 ♔d1 ♖d8+ 34 ♘d2 ♖xd2+ 35 ♔xd2 ♕xc3+ with perpetual.

29...♔f8 30 ♘xe6+?!

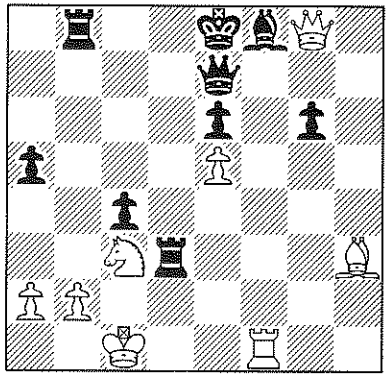
Again I missed my way! Here too 30 ♘ce4! would still have retained a good game: 30...♖xh3! (it not possible to play either 30...♗xe5? 31 ♖f1, or 30...♖xb2? 31 ♘xe6+ fxe6 32 ♖f1+ ♔e8 33 ♕g8+ ♗f8 34 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 35 ♘f6+ ♔e7 36 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 37 ♕c8+) 31 ♕xh3 ♗xe5 32 ♖f1! ♗xb2+ 33 ♔c2 f5. Here there is a divergence:

1) 34 ♕h6+ ♗g7 35 ♕xg6 ♖b2+ 36 ♔c1 ♖xa2 37 ♘xe6+ (or 37 ♘h7+ ♔g8 38 ♘hf6+ ♔f8) 37...♔g8 38 ♖f3! fxe4 39 ♖f8+ is a draw;

2) 34 ♘c5! ♔g8! (34...♔e8? is bad after 35 ♘gxe6 ♗e5 36 ♖e1 ♖b2+ 37 ♔c1 ♕d6 38 ♕h6 ♖g2 39 ♘c7+! ♔f7 40 ♕h7+ ♗g7 41 ♕xg7+!, or 39...♕xc7 40 ♕h8+ ♔f7 41 ♖xe5 ♖g1+ 42 ♔c2 ♕d6 43 ♕e8+ ♔g7 44 ♘e6+ ♔f6 45 ♕h8+) 35 ♕g3! ♖e8! (35...e5 36 ♘f3 ♕d6 37 ♖h1!) 36 ♘gxe6 ♕f6 37 ♖g1 ♗e5 38 ♕xg6+ ♕xg6 39 ♖xg6+ ♔f7 40 ♖h6 ♖g8 with a draw.

In any event, playing White would have been easier: the opponent would have had to find the only moves to save himself. But I wanted to do everything with checks...

30...fxe6 31 ♖f1+ ♔e8 32 ♕g8+ ♗f8



33 ♕xg6+?

The most annoying thing is that even here White could still have saved himself with the fantastic study-like move 33 ♘d5!!, for example: 33...♔d7!? (33...exd5 34 ♖xf8+! ♕xf8 35 ♕e6+ ♕e7 36 ♕g8+ with perpetual check) 34 ♘xe7 ♗h6+ 35 ♔c2 ♖xg8 36 ♘xg8 ♖xh3 37 ♖d1+! ♔c7 (37...♔e8 38 ♘f6+) 38 ♘xh6 ♖xh6 39 ♖d4 with a draw (I discovered this only later).

33...♔d8! 0-1

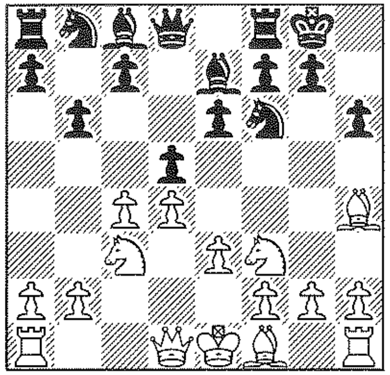
Here White overstepped the time limit. After 34 ♗xe6 ♕b4! (but not 34...♖b6? 35 ♕g8 ♖xc3+ 36 ♔b1! ♖xb2+ 37 ♔xb2 ♕b4+ 38 ♔a1 ♖f3 with a draw) 35 ♘a4 ♗e7! 36 ♕g8+ ♔c7 37 ♕h7 ♖bd8! or 36 ♗f5 ♖d4 37 ♕c6 ♕d2+ 38 ♔b1 ♖f4 he would have lost.

This was my only defeat in the tournament. Spassky again displayed remarkable resourcefulness, and although he was inaccurate in some details, on the whole he proved more cunning. I was told that immediately after the game Boris Vasilievich joyfully telephoned his wife in Paris and shouted into the receiver: 'Marina, I've beaten Kasparov!' As for me, I angrily defeated Nikolic with Black the following day, and in the end took first place with 11 out of 14 – three points more than my 'tormentor'.

I had to wait quite a long time for my revenge. By beating Spassky in Barcelona 1989 and Linares 1990, I levelled our individual score: 2-2. It is amusing that my tournament relations with Petrosian took a similar course: against him I also initially lost twice with White, and then twice, again with White, regained my losses. True, in our first meetings Petrosian obtained indifferent, but nevertheless playable positions, whereas Spassky's were mathematically lost, and their conversion did not require use of the Binomial theorem. But alas...

I should also say something about the influence of Spassky's ideas on my 'Black' opening repertoire in the mid-1980s. Being an inveterate King's Indian player, I had to master the classics on my approach to the summit. I remember the pronouncement of one my helpers at that time, grandmaster Evgeny Vladimirov: 'The Queen's Gambit is the opening of world championship matches!' It was a question not only of the Tarrasch Defence (cf. *Game No.75*), but also the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 b6

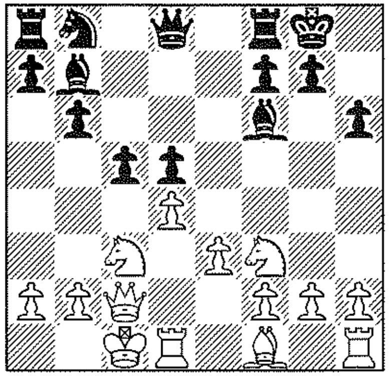


In studying this variation before my matches with Korchnoi (1983) and Karpov (1984/85), we paid attention to a number of instructive games by Spassky and Geller:

1) 8 ♕c2

The variation 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘xd5 exd5 11 ♖c1 ♗e6 12 ♕a4 c5 13 ♕a3 ♖c8 14 ♗b5 (Fischer-Spassky, 6th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972 – cf. Volume 4) went out of use after 14...♕b7! 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 17 ♕xc5 ♘a6! (Timman-Geller, Hilversum 1973).

8...♗b7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0-0 (the most double-edged plan, which attracted me in my youth) **11...c5**



12 g4

My game with Zaitsev (Baku 1980) went 12 dxc5 ♘d7! (after 12...♗xc3 13 ♕xc3 ♘d7 14 c6 ♗xc6 15 ♔b1 ♖c8 16 ♕d4 White is slightly better, Polugayevsky-Ivkov, Beverwijk 1966; also possible here is 13...♕e7!? Ovechkin-Bologan, Moscow 2003; whereas the sacrifice 12...bxc5 13 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♗c4 ♘d7 15 ♖xd5 ♖b8 is unfavourable on account of 16 b3 ♕e7 17 h4! ♘b6 18 ♖e5! ♕d6 – 18...♗xe5? 19 ♘g5! – 19 ♖e4 ♘xc4 20 ♖xc4 ♖fd8 21 ♘d2 ♕e5 22 ♖xc5 and wins, Nikitin-Gergel, Vilnius 1980) 13 ♘xd5 (13 c6 ♗xc6 14 ♘d4 ♗b7 with equality) 13...♘xc5 14 ♗c4 (14 ♕f5 ♕c8!) 14...b5 15 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16 ♗d5 ♖ac8 17 ♔b1 ♘a4 18 ♕e2 ♗xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c4! 20 ♖d4 ♖fc8 21 ♖hd1 ♕g6+? (the correct move is 21...♖c2! 22 ♕xc2 ♖xc2 23 ♔xc2 ♕g6+ 24 ♔d2 ♘xb2 25 ♖c1 ♕xg2 26 ♔e2 ♘c4 with a good game, Ghitescu-Lputian, Berlin 1982) 22 ♕d3 ♕xg2 23 ♕f5!. 1-0.

12...cxd4 13 exd4 ♘c6 14 h4 g6 15 g5

Nothing is promised by 15 h5 g5 16 ♕f5 ♘b4 17 ♘e5 ♗c8 18 ♕f3 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♕c7 20 ♔b1 ♕xe5 with equality (Ogdestein-H.Olafsson, Gjovik 1985), but 15 ♔b1 or 15 ♗b5 is more solid.

15...hxg5 16 h5?!

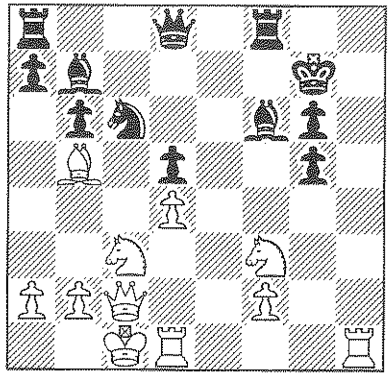
Too reckless, although fully in the spirit of the motto 'Forward, Kazimirych!' It is stronger to play 16 hxg5 ♗xg5+ (after 16...♗g7 17 ♕d2 or 17 ♖h4 White has far more attacking chances than in the game) 17 ♔b1 with compensation for the pawn in the form of open lines on the kingside.

16...♔g7!

Of course, not 16...g4? 17 hxg6 gxf3 18 g7 ♗g5+ 19 ♔b1 ♔xg7 20 ♕h7+ ♔f6 21 ♖h3! and Black is in trouble: 21...♔e7 22 ♕f5! ♔e8 23 ♖e1+ ♗e7 24 ♘xd5 ♕d6 25 ♗b5 ♔d8 26 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 27 ♘xe7 ♗b7 28 ♖xf3!, or 21...♔e6 22 ♖xf3 ♔d7 23 ♖f5 ♔c8 24 ♖xd5, winning the g5-bishop and the game. Now, however, White's direct attack comes to a standstill and he has to switch to positional lines.

17 hxg6 fxg6 18 ♗b5?

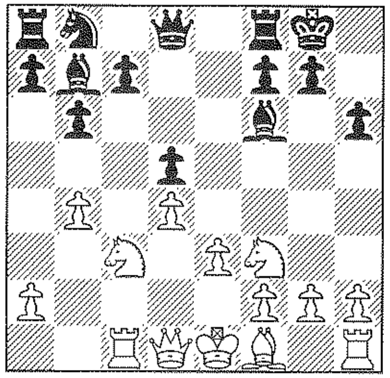
A step towards defeat. After 18 ♕d2! White would still have had compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



18...g4! 19 ♕d2 (it was also bad to play 19 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 20 ♘e5? ♗xe5 21 dxe5 d4! or 20 ♖dg1 ♗g5+ 21 ♘xg5 ♕xg5+ etc.) **19...gxf3 20 ♕h6+ ♔f7 21 ♕h7+?! ♗g7 22 ♖h3 ♖h8!**

The queen is trapped! White resigned in view of 23 ♖xf3+ ♕f6 24 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 25 ♘xd5+ ♔f7 (Uhlmann-Spassky, Moscow 1967). For Spassky this was an easy little task; that evening, like Capablanca on one occasion, he could well have been in time for the theatre.

2) 8 ♖c1 ♗b7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4



11...c6?!

Spassky does not like forcing the play immediately by 11...c5! 12 bxc5 bxc5, although this is the sharpest response: 13 ♗b5 ♘a6 14 0-0 ♘c7 15 ♕a4 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 17 exd4 ♘e6 18 ♗a6? (18 ♘e2 is equal) 18...♗xa6 19 ♕xa6 ♕g5! 20 ♘e2 ♖ab8 with an excellent game for Black (Hoi-Geller, Malta Olympiad 1980). I was present at this game from the last, decisive round of the Olympiad, and Efim Petrovich quickly gained a spectacular win. It is more interesting to play 13 dxc5 ♘d7 14 ♘b5 ♖c8! 15 ♗e2 (15 ♘d6 ♖xc5 16 ♘xb7 ♖xc1 17 ♕xc1 ♕b6 with equality, Timman-Hübner, Tilburg 1979) 15...♘xc5 (15...♖xc5!?) 16 0-0 a6 17 ♘bd4 with a complicated struggle (Akopian-Short, Linares 1995).

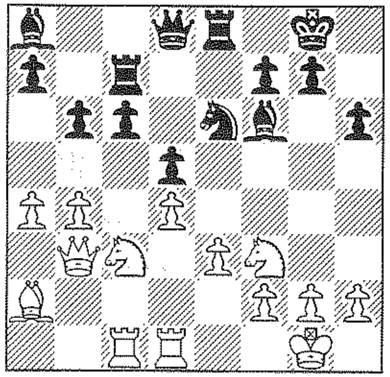
12 ♗d3!

An important improvement. Previously Korchnoi had played 12 ♗e2. Now he hit on an interesting idea with the manoeuvre of the bishop to b1 and then, after a2-a3(a4), to a2 followed by e3-e4 or b4-b5 (cf. the note to White's 8th move in variation 3).

12...♖e8 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♕b3 ♘f8 15 ♖fd1 ♖c8 16 ♗b1! (16 e4 ♘e6 17 e5 ♗e7) **16...♘e6 17 a4**

After 17 ♕c2 g6 18 ♘e5, as recommended by Stean, 18...♕d6 is satisfactory. But 17 a3!? is interesting, not weakening the b4-square.

17...♗a8 18 ♗a2 ♖c7!

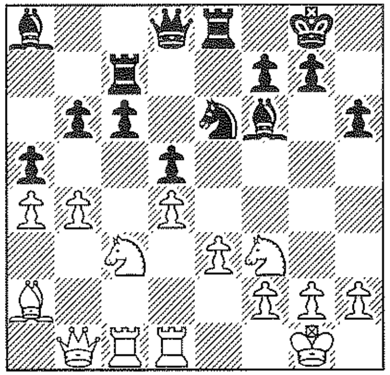


19 ♕b1?!

It is more energetic to play 19 b5! c5 20 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♕xd5 ♖d7 22 ♕f5! (in my opinion, 22 ♕b3 cxd4 23 exd4 ♗xd4 is inferior) 22...cxd4 (22...g6 23 ♕d3) 23 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 24 ♕d3 ♖dd6 25 exd4 (25 e4!?) 25...♗xd4 26 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 27 ♕xd4 ♖e1+ 28 ♖xe1 ♕xd4 29

♖a1 and although things are closer to a draw, it is nevertheless White who is playing for a win.

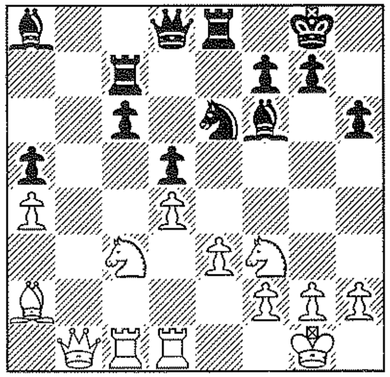
19...a5?! (it is more solid to play 19...♖d7! and only then ...a7-a5)



20 bxa5?!

Of course, the correct move is 20 b5! c5 21 dxc5 ♗xc3 (21...♖xc5 22 ♘e4! ♖xc1 23 ♕xc1; whereas here 22...dxe4?! 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 ♗xe6 exf3 25 ♖xc5 bxc5 26 ♗b3 fxg2 27 ♕c2 is inferior) 22 c6! (not 22 ♖xc3 ♘xc5 23 ♕c2 ♕f6 24 ♗xd5 ♖d7 25 e4 ♖ed8 with counterplay thanks to the powerful knight at c5) 22...♗f6 23 ♗xd5 ♕e7 24 ♘d2 ♘c5 25 ♕c2 with more than sufficient compensation for the piece.

20...bxa5



Now Black's positional idea is justified: the white pawn on a4 makes the manoeuvre ♘a4-c5 impossible, the bishop at a2 is inactive, and the weakness of the c6-pawn is counterbalanced by the weakness of the b4-square.

21 ♕b6?!

A fundamental mistake. After 21 ♕d3, with the gradual return to life of the a2-bishop, it would have been harder for Black to exploit the pluses of his position.

21...♖b7! 22 ♕xd8 (22 ♕xc6?? ♖b6 and wins) **22...♖xd8 23 ♘e1 ♖b6 24 ♘d3 ♖db8 25 h3?**

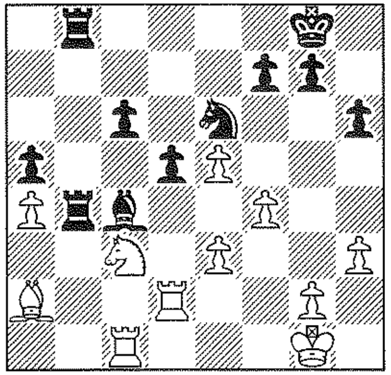
Not sensing the danger. Stean suggested 25 ♖b1! ♔f8 26 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 27 ♖b1 ♖xb1+ 28 ♘xb1 ♔e7 29 ♘d2 ♔d6 30 ♘b3 with equality, but it is stronger to play 27...♗d8! 28 ♖xb6 ♗xb6 29 ♔f1 ♗b7 30 ♔e1 ♔e7 31 ♗b1 ♗c7 and ...♗d6 with some advantage for Black.

25...♗b7! 26 ♘e5 ♗xe5 27 dxe5 ♖b4! (it transpires that White now has a difficult position) **28 f3**

The commentators recommended 28 e4 d4 (28...dxe4?! 29 ♖d7) 29 ♘e2 ♖d8 30 ♗xe6 fxe6 31 ♘f4 ♔f7 32 ♘d3 ♖xa4 33 ♘c5 ♖b4 34 ♖b1 with drawing chances (thanks to the strength of the knight at c5), but in my opinion, it is better for Black to try 29...♗a6! 30 ♘g3 ♖8b6! 31 ♘f5 ♗e2! 32 ♖d2 d3 when things are difficult for White: 33 ♗xe6 fxe6 34 ♘g3 ♖b1 35 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 36 ♔h2 ♖d1 etc.

28...♗a6 29 ♖d2 ♗c4 30 f4?

A more tenacious defence is 30 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 31 ♘e2 ♖xc1+ 32 ♘xc1 ♖b4 33 ♖c2 ♖xa4 34 ♖xc6 ♖c4 35 ♖xc4 dxc4 36 ♔f2 with hopes of saving the knight endgame.



30...♘c5! 31 ♖d4 ♘d3 32 ♖d1 ♘b2! (a fine knight manoeuvre!) **33 ♖c1 c5 34 ♖xd5** (or 34 ♖d2 ♗xa2 35 ♘xa2 ♖xa4 36 ♘c3 ♖c4 37 ♖xd5 ♘a4 and wins) **34...♗xd5 35 ♗xd5 c4 36 ♘e4 ♘xa4 0-1**

In view of 37 ♗xc4 ♖b1 38 ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 39 ♔f2 ♘b6 (Korchnoi-Spassky, 11th matchgame, Belgrade 1977/78). This was the first of Korchnoi's four successive defeats in that dramatic match.

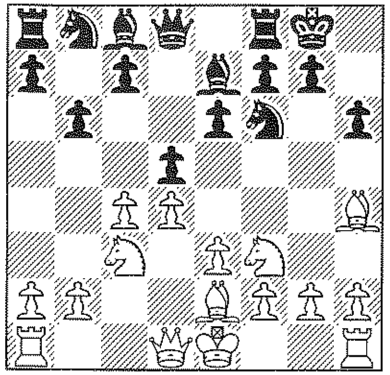
In connection with this game, I recall one of my first meetings with Karpov (Moscow 1981), where after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 7 e3 0-0 8 ♕d2 ♘c6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♗e2 ♗f5 11 0-0 ♘e7 12 b4 c6 13 ♖fc1 a6 14 a4 ♕d6 15 ♕b2 ♖fe8 16 ♕b3 ♘g6 I played 17 ♖a2 and offered a draw, but Karpov instantly replied 17...♗e7 and suddenly, in violation of the rules, said: 'Make a move!' Surprised, I played 18 b5 and then Karpov, after thinking, agreed to the draw. In analysis after the game he remarked that 18...axb5 19 axb5 was indeed a draw, but 18...a5!? 19 bxc6 bxc6 was possible, exploiting the weakness of the b4-square. And he added something like 'That's how Spassky tricked Korchnoi.' That is, Karpov had adopted Spassky's idea (however, in the given specific situation, after 20 ♕d1, with the idea of ♗d3, ♘e2 and ♖ac2, the weakness of the c6-pawn is more important, so that 18...axb5 is nevertheless better).

3) 8 ♗e2

Korchnoi-Kasparov (10th matchgame, London 1983) went 8 ♕b3 ♗b7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♖d1 ♖e8 12 a3!? (after 12 ♗d3 there is a choice between 12...c5 13 dxc5 ♘d7 and Geller's plan of 12...♘c6, ...♘a5 and ...c7-c5) 12...c6 13 ♗d3 ♘d7 14 0-0 g6!? (14...♘f8 15 e4!) 15 ♖fe1 (15 e4 c5!) 15...♘f8 16 ♗b1! (16 e4 ♘e6 17 e5 ♗g7 is unclear) 16...♘e6 17 ♗a2 ♕c7! 18 ♕a4!? (or 18 e4 ♖ad8 19 exd5 cxd5 20 ♕a4 ♕b8 with equality) 18...♖ad8 19 b4! ♕b8 (19...a6!?) 20 ♕c2! ♕c7! and Black maintained the balance with difficulty.

Attempts in the new century have not been so dangerous: 15 ♖d2?! ♘f8 16 ♖c1 ♘e6 17 ♕d1 ♕e7 with equality (Piket-Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 2001), or 15 ♗b1 ♗g7 16 e4?! ♗a6! 17 ♖fe1 ♗c4 18 ♕c2 dxe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♗b3 21 ♗c2 ♘f6 ½-½ (Kramnik-Kasparov, 3rd matchgame, Moscow 2001).

Incidentally, in his match with me Korchnoi also devised the move 12 a3!? against the Tarrasch Defence. By working for years on such strategic ideas and problems, he made a great contribution to the development of opening theory.



8...♗b7

8...♘bd7 9 cxd5 exd5 10 0-0 ♗b7 11 ♖c1 (11 ♕b3 c5! 12 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 ♖fd1 ♕e7 15 ♘d4 ♖ad8 16 ♖ac1 ♘e4 17 ♗f3 ♖fe8 with equality, Belyavsky-Geller, 47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979) 11...c5 12 ♕a4!? a6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♖fd1 ♕b6 15 ♕b3! ♕a7 (in the endgame after 15...♕xb3 16 axb3 the weakness of the hanging pawns is more perceptible than the weakness of the doubled b-pawns) 16 ♗g3 (Karpov-Kasparov, 31st matchgame, Moscow 1984/85, and Topalov-Kasparov, 1st matchgame, Sofia rapidplay 1998) leads to more dynamic play with hanging pawns for Black, but with accurate play White retains some advantage.

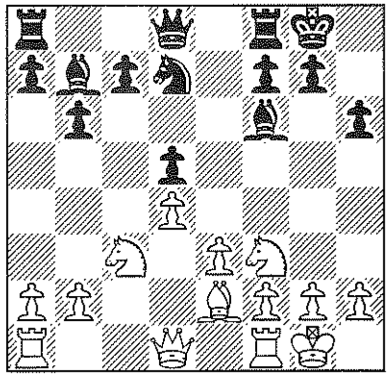
9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0

11 ♕b3 c6 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♖ad1 ♘d7 (13...♘a6!? – the knight will be better placed at

c7 than at f8) comes to the same thing, while the variation 11 b4 c5 (or 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 b4 c5) became a *tabiya* of my matches with Karpov.

11...♘d7

Having suffered a painful defeat after 11...♕d6?! in the 11th game of his match with Karpov (1974), Spassky tried to find a more accurate defence.



12 ♕b3 c6 13 ♖ad1

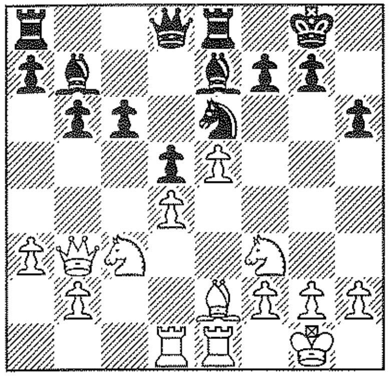
After 13 ♖fe1 ♖e8 14 e4 there is the typical counter 14...c5! 15 ♘xd5 cxd4 16 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 17 ♕a4 ♘c5 18 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♖xe4 20 ♘b5 ♗c6 ½-½ (Timman-Spassky, Bugojno 1982).

13...♖e8 14 ♖fe1

14 ♘e1?! is unsuccessful after 14...♘f8 15 ♘d3 ♘e6 16 ♖fe1 ♕d6 17 ♗f1 ♖e7 18 g3? ♗xd4! 19 exd4 ♘xd4 20 ♕a4 ♘f3+ 21 ♔h1 ♘xe1 22 ♘xe1 d4 23 ♘g2 c5 24 ♔g1 ♖ae8 25 ♘b1 (25 ♗b5 ♕f6! and wins) 25...a6 26 ♘d2 b5 27 ♕a3 ♕d5... 0-1 (Vaganian-Spassky, Moscow 1975). 14 ♗d3 also looks like the loss of a tempo – Korchnoi reached this position against me with his pawn already on a3 (cf. the note to White's 8th move).

14...♘f8 15 e4!? (or 15 ♗f1 ♘e6 with equality, Chandler-Spassky, Germany 1981, and Piket-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999) **15...♘e6** (15...dxe4? 16 ♗c4!) **16 e5** (16 exd5 cxd5 17 ♗b5 ♖e7 with equality) **16...♗e7 17 a3**

Another attempt by Timman. Before this there had occurred 17 ♖d2 ♗g5! (Hort-Tal, Montreal 1979) and 17 ♕c2 ♕c7 18 ♗d3 ♖ad8 19 ♘e2 c5 with equality (Nikolic-Geller, Sochi 1982).



17...♗f8

Of course, not 17...c5? 18 dxc5 ♘xc5 19 ♕a2! The two players begin manoeuvring and Black does this rather more successfully.

18 g3 ♖c8 19 ♖d2 (19 ♗f1!?) **19...g6 20 ♗f1 h5 21 ♗g2 ♖c7 22 ♕a2 ♖d7 23 b4** (23 ♖ed1 ♗h6 24 ♖c2 is more solid) **23...♕e7**

23...c5!? 24 dxc5 bxc5 25 bxc5 ♗xc5 was possible, but Spassky did not want to define the position so quickly.

24 ♖dd1 (probably, 24 ♖b1!? should have been played) **24...a5!**

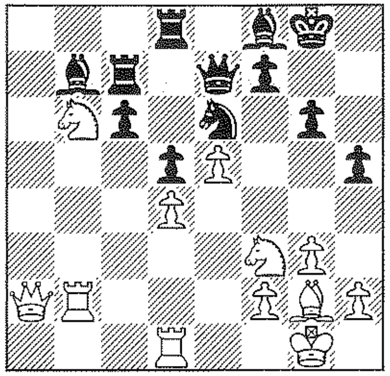
The same unexpected undermining move, as in the game with Korchnoi (from variation 2).

25 ♘a4?!

In my opinion, there is a better variation that was not mentioned by anyone: 25 bxa5 bxa5 26 ♕d2! ♗a6 (26...♕xa3 27 ♖a1 ♕e7 28 ♖xa5 c5 29 ♗h3 is unclear) 27 ♖b1 ♕d8 28 ♕e3, maintaining a dynamic balance.

25...axb4 26 ♘xb6 ♖c7 27 axb4 ♕xb4 28 ♖b1 ♕e7 29 ♖ed1 ♖d8 30 ♖b2?

A serious mistake. Now the latent dynamics of Black's position are revealed. After 30 ♘a4! ♗a6 (30...c5 31 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 32 dxc5 ♕xc5 was recommended 'with advantage to Black', but after 33 ♘d4 ♗g7 34 f4 there is no advantage) 31 ♗f1 (31 ♕c2 c5 32 dxc5 ♘xc5 33 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 34 ♕d2 d4) 31...♗xf1 32 ♔xf1 White would hardly have encountered any serious problems.



30...c5! 31 dxc5 d4! 32 ♕a3?

It was essential to play 32 ♘c4 ♗d5 33 ♘fd2 ♕xc5 34 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 or 32 ♘d2 ♗xg2 33 ♔xg2 ♕xc5 34 ♘bc4 ♕d5+ 35 f3 ♖a8 36 ♕b3 ♘c5 37 ♕c2 ♘d7, and although Black has the advantage everywhere, White is capable of resisting. However, he goes to pieces and loses in literally two moves.

32...♖xc5 33 ♘a4? ♖c1! 34 ♕d3 (or 34 ♕b3 ♗d5 35 ♖xc1 ♗xb3 36 ♖xb3 ♕a7 37 ♘b6 d3) **34...♕a3! 35 ♕f1 ♖xd1 36 ♕xd1 ♗c6 0-1** (Timman-Spassky, 3rd matchgame, Hilversum 1983). From the point of view of Black's plans, this is also one of the key games of this variation.

And now, as usual, a few memorable phrases by the chess kings.

Botvinnik: 'Spassky is a great player. He is a continuation of the Lasker line – he is little interested in what others are doing, but has his own opinion... Spassky possesses enviable health, he is a good psychologist, and he subtly evaluates the situation, his strengths, and the strengths of his opponent. He rarely gets into time-trouble, he is a splendid athlete, and nothing frightens him. Spassky is always in a good, cheerful frame of mind. He played simply wonderfully in the second match with Petrosian, but he lost the match to Fischer through stupidity: he overrated himself.'

Smyslov: 'Spassky is a player of enormous practical strength, versatile to the highest degree. He prefers clear methods of play, but he feels very much at home in complicated positions, full of tactical possibilities.'

Petrosian: 'Already after my first match with Spassky (1966) I had a feeling that a new encounter with him was possible. I was staggered by his tenacity and resourcefulness in defence, and his composure and endurance after a defeat. And, of course, to twice make such a difficult ascent to the top is something that few could have done.'

Spassky: 'I would simplistically divide chess players into two categories: believers and non-believers. In the chess sense, of course. There are laws that demand respect, which players aim not to violate. These are the "believers". To them I would assign the classics: Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian and Geller. I too am a "religious" player. Korchnoi and Larsen (*and also Tal – G.K.*) belong to the atheists, who by no means always respect these laws.'

Fischer: 'Spassky is, in fact, a sounder player than Tal, but Tal is more brilliant. Spassky has some weaknesses, but he makes it difficult for an opponent to take advantage of them. He doesn't play closed positional chess very well. Still, he always seems a little ahead of you on theory.'

Karpov: 'Spassky was a complete and absolutely universal player. He was equally good at attacking, defending, and accumulating positional advantages. It was he who created the fashion for universality, which is alive to this day.'

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